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DEW AND MILDEW

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

BEAU GESTE
BEAU SABREUR
BEAU IDEAL
GOOD GESTES
SOLDIERS OF MISFORTUNE
THE WAGES OF VIRTUE
STEPSONS OF FRANCE
SNAKE AND THE SWORD
FATHER GREGORY
DEW AND MILDEW
DRIFTWOOD SPARS
THE YOUNG STAGERS

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DEW AND MILDEW

PERCIVAL
CHRISTOPHER WREN

JOHN MURRAY

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Dedicated

TO

THE MEMORY OF "BOODLE"

WHOM THE GODS LOVED

La vie est brève :
Un peu d'espoir,
Un peu de rêve,
Et puis—*bonsoir*.

"Ah! when at last we lie with trancèd breath,
Not vexing Thee in death,
And Thou rememberest of what toys
We made our joys;
How weakly understood
Thy great commanded good;
Then—fatherly—not less
Than I, whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath and say,
'I will be sorry for their childishness.'"

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CHAPTER I

THE STRANGE TRUE TALE OF SUDDEN-DEATH LODGE, KARABAD, INDIA

NO sane and sober man believes in Ghosts to-day. The sane and sober man not only does not believe in Ghosts—he knows that no such thing as a Ghost exists, ever did exist, or ever will exist. Moreover, he has a healthy, hearty contempt for the insane or unsober person who does believe in Ghosts.

No sane and sober man believes in Curses—you know what I mean—to-day. The bare idea of an efficient and effectual Fakir's Curse makes him smile the smile of wise superiority. Not only does he not believe in the power of a fakir to curse and to blight—he knows that no fakir who can curse and blight, exists, ever did exist, or ever will exist.

Still, the sanest and soberest of us admits the existence of Coincidences.

East of Suez, Coincidences flourish, and sometimes attain a remarkably fine growth.

Also the sanest and soberest of us admits that things occur that are undeniably Queer—but which are, of course, perfectly explicable when one knows all the facts.

East of Suez, Queer Occurrences are much too

frequent, and, though perfectly explicable, of course, when one knows all the facts, remain unexplained because one never does know all the "facts."

One merely knows that the occurrences occur.

Mr. Sohrabji Rustomji Potwallah, of Karabad, was a Parsi gentleman of parts—large parts. He weighed twenty-three stone.

Albeit a most orthodox and devout Zoroastrian, regular in attendance at the Fire Temple, and observant of all Rites and Dues and Days, it must be admitted that he worshipped Money as his God.

With regard to the God of the Hereafter he hoped for the best; with regard to the God of the Here he did his best. Therefore he waxed rich and his balance outgrew his conscience, as his heart turned to gold. His heart of gold was hard as gold, dull as gold, heavy as gold, cold as gold.

But his tongue was of silver. So, having a hard heart of gold he built the bungalow, and as he transmitted his sweet-toned tongue of silver to his son, the latter let it, *once*, in spite of drawbacks.

What cared Sohrabji Rustomji Potwallah, a rich man who had begun life as a rag-and-bottle dealer, for the prayers and tears and, lastly, the Curse, of a wretched, penniless, naked, old fakir, who, for exactly fifty years, had sat beside his Master's tomb under the pipal tree, and subsisted on the doles of the faithful, and of others?

If he had sat there for fifty years it was about time he got up and took a walk, since Mr. Potwallah wanted to build the bungalow where he squatted.

If the tomb of his Master had been illuminated by the rays of a tiny wick-and-saucer lamp—provided and tended by the old fakir—every night for fifty

years, it was high time good oil was put to a more useful purpose.

If the Prophet had given his special attention to the said lamp for fifty years with the result that never once in fifty years had the night wind blown the lamp out, it was high time the Prophet had a rest, or attended to more important duties.

If the old fakir would surely die when uprooted from the spot where he had sat, night and day, for fifty years, he was kindly welcome. . . .

Would not the great, noble, wealthy, beneficent Protector of the Poor, Potwallah, try to conceive what it was to be torn from the place where one had sat and seen men come and go, a generation disappear, babies grow to old age—for fifty is old age in India—a village increase to a town, and be cast out, after fifty years? . . .

The great, noble, wealthy, beneficent Protector of the Poor, Potwallah, would not. . . .

Could the good and kind Source of Light conceive what it was to be a man's worshipping disciple; to follow that man for twenty years, proud to wash his feet, proud to be his sweeper; to be saved alive and assured of Paradise for ever, by him; to hold him in one's arms as he died, and to watch and tend his tomb for fifty years, spreading his fame and crying his name, and then—to be cast out from the place that was the World, at the age of perhaps ninety, or more? . . .

The good and kind Source of Light could not. . . .

Would a river of tears flowing from an old man's breaking heart, through fast closing eyes, soften the heart of the *Seth*?[1] . . .

[1] Banker. Rich man.

They wouldn't. . . .

Would the constant, unwearying earnest prayers of one who had followed Holiness (and been Ascetic for three generations of common men) move the heart of the rajah-like Feeder of Many ? . . .

They wouldn't. . . .

Would absolutely *nothing* turn the cruel and impious man from his determination to commit the sacrilegious act of razing the Pir's tomb, evicting the old-established fakir, felling the pipal tree, and building a bungalow upon the very Bones of Holiness and the Site of Piety ? . . .

Nothing. . . .

Then uprose the old fakir for the first time in the memory of living man, cursed Sohrabji Rustomji Potwallah, cursed his family, root and branch, cursed the unbuilt bungalow and all who should ever live or serve in it—and incontinent fell down dead.

Mr. Potwallah smiled, and reflected on the folly of working oneself up into a temper, and of going against one's Kismet.

But it was a fine, full-flavoured, traditional old Curse, and nearly as detailed as a last Will and Testament. " Build it, and in two years it shall destroy thee," had raved the silly old fakir, " and within two years more thy son it shall destroy, and in the fullness of time thy son's son, and thy seed, so long as it shall stand ; and grief and sorrow shall it bring upon thy family, and good to none of them shall it bring. . . . Let those who lift a hand in the building of it beware, for they shall rue. . . . Let men shun it and fear to dwell in it, for upon all who sojourn or serve therein, great evil and great grief shall it bestow ; and to him

who dwelleth beneath its roof for the space of two years, Death shall then come—swift, sudden, and terrible. And one of the household of him who bideth for a lesser time shall die—unless he die himself—one whom he loveth, so that, though his body live, his heart shall die within him; and this shall be until the accursed House be utterly destroyed, and my Master's tomb restored and duly adorned with green flags, and little lamps by night. . . . *I curse, I curse, I curse*"—and with the last shrieked word he had fallen dead.

But Mr. Sohrabji Rustomji Potwallah happened to be one of the sane and sober men who, very rightly and properly, laugh to scorn the bare notion of a Curse; and he built him a fine bungalow where, for fifty years, the Pir's tomb had stood and the Pir's disciple had sat.

However, in felling and uprooting and removing the pipal tree, a happy family of cobras was disturbed and displaced, which, to the minds of the labourers and coolies, really was an evil omen, and a very bad beginning.

It proved to be of decidedly bad omen in the case of one woman who carried large stones on her head. It is hard to balance a big stone on the head and watch the ground too, and there is no sense in trying to combat the will of the gods when once you have trodden on a cobra.

Still, there was no obvious connexion between the cobras and the false step that Sitaram Maistri made on the scaffolding, and which proved to be a step into the next world. Nor, to the blunted and agnostic, was there clearly established relation between the said cobras and the boiling-pitch accident causing

the death of the toddling grandchild of the *chowkidar*[1] who guarded the building materials by night. Nor between them and the Great Cyclone that wrecked the partly-built house and sent a big half-cylinder tile through the thin skull of that same old gentleman, the *chowkidar*.

When a few more deaths had occurred among the builders, the job was regarded as unlucky—but still it was mere Coincidence, of course.

Months passed, and a year passed, and months again, and the extraordinary bad luck continued.

Air, fire, and water did their worst. . . .

When finished, it was the pride of the golden heart of Mr. Sohrabji Rustomji Potwallah, and he looked to it yet to prove the very finest of all his fine investments, and to justify his wisdom in beginning to buy land and to build bungalows—primarily for Europeans—wherever he could, in view of the surely coming boom and rapid growth of Karabad.

Land worth an anna a *guntha* was going to be worth a thousand rupees a square yard by-and-by, said Mr. Potwallah, and he wasn't far wrong.

On the day after the last blow had been struck, the last tool used, and the last workman and coolie had departed, Mr. Sohrabji Rustomji Potwallah was driven in his private coach from his private house in the odorous bazaar—not odorous from odours of Araby and spices of the East; mere lack of drains really—to his beautiful new house, in which he had no sort of intention of residing.

More, he dragged his twenty-three stone of gouty, dropsical, wheezy carcase, step by step, to the upper

[1] Watchman.

floor, and proudly gazed from the broad verandah upon the fair campaign that enjoyed the honour to be the setting of his architectural jewel.

His little nephew, Homi, accompanied him, disported himself throughout the echoing rooms, and gambolled light-heartedly in the pure joy of living and high animal spirits.

Through an open door he darted, and, looking round a moment later, Mr. Potwallah beheld the idolized child hanging perilously over the light balustrade of the external sweeper's-staircase that clung to the wall as the swallows' nests later did to the eaves. When Mr. Potwallah was hurt he always roared. The sight of the delight of his old age, using the top of the balustrade as a gymnasium horizontal-bar, hurt him with a great mental anguish, and he roared excitedly, accusingly, suddenly,—"*Homi!*" . . . Startled, the boy lurched, clutched wildly, and toppled outwards, and, as he disappeared, Mr. Potwallah propelled his mighty bulk forward with another bellow. In his agony he achieved what was almost a leap. At any rate it was leap enough to accomplish his undoing, for he struck the wooden railings with his enormous person as his hands grabbed at the air—and his twenty-three stone dropped thirty-three feet. . . .

That Mr. Potwallah should have broken his neck and crushed his beloved nephew, on the occasion of his first entering the finished house, was considered to be a terrible piece of bad luck—and a queer Coincidence. . . .

Another strange coincidence occurred in the Potwallah family when the silver-tongued and golden-hearted Jamsedji Sohrabji Potwallah (son and heir of the late Sohrabji Rustomji Potwallah, while backing

respectfully before Mr. and Mrs. Reild, who had taken, and were inspecting, the house, backed himself to the top of the stairs, fell down them, and was picked up dead of a ruptured spleen. You cannot blame a house, surely, because people fall over its balustrades or down its stairs? . . . Mere coincidence.

Similarly it was mere coincidence when, later, the also silver-tongued and golden-hearted Dorabji Jamsedji Potwallah, son and heir of the deceased Jamsedji Sohrabji Potwallah, scratched his wrist on a rusty nail when opening a window in the long-closed house, got blood-poisoning, and shortly after died thereof.

Could you blame the *house*?

No. Nor when his son, young Hormusji Dorabji Potwallah, feeling sure the house would kill him, went and poisoned himself beneath its hospitable roof and died in a very curious attitude. This was mere superstitious terror, and a ratification of the Curse by auto-suggestion as it were. Anyhow, it was sheer coincidence—as was the curiously relentless fate that dogged the unhappy descendants of Mr. Sohrabji Rustomji Potwallah. . . .

Mr. and Mrs. Reild took the house—in spite of ugly rumours and the unpleasant incident of the owner's death before their eyes—because there was no other house to take.

One can hardly expect Government to see that even its officials have somewhere to live—much less mere non-officials—and when wealthy Indian gentlemen who wish to live "European-fassen" can outbid them ten times over in purchase or rent, Englishmen must live in the houses not required by the wealthy Indian gentlemen. It is probable that, in course of time, the little rooms over the bazaar shops will be tenanted

solely by *chota-sahibs*[1] and junior English gazetted officials, and very rightly, for it is against the laws of Political Economy that men with five hundred rupees a month should have houses which are desired by men with five thousand—or fifty thousand. Whether it is against the laws of Political Expediency, in this case, I do not know.

Certainly, however, no wealthy Indian gentlemen competed with Reild for possession of the new house—or with any of his many successors.

There is still great respect paid, in ancient and unprogressive India, to curses and to the prophecies of fakirs and other peculiar people; and Coincidences and Queer Occurrences are called by much more superstitious names. In point of fact, there was not enough money in Karabad—or possibly in all India—to induce a wealthy Indian gentleman to enter the house at all.

The Reilds found the house most conveniently planned, light, airy, comfortable, and in every way satisfactory, and no reasonable person is going to blame the house because the Manager of his Firm suddenly died of cholera, and young inexperienced Reild, anxious, conscientious, and weak, left in sole charge, was worried to death during the interregnum he was called upon to tide over as best he could.

It was not the fault of the house that he would sit up in the middle of the night and shriek, "*I did wrong over that Mauritius Sugar,*" or "*Look out, I say, the market is falling—tons of Sugar,*" or "*The Firm is toppling! Prop it, quick, prop it,*" or begin telephoning to London through the bicycle-pump instead of inflating his tyre therewith, when starting to office.

1 Less important gentlemen.

It was not the fault of the house that he soon could not sleep at all, went out for quiet strolls at two in the morning, and took to narcotic drugs and alcohol. But it was a cruel worry and grief to poor little Mrs. Reild, who hoped to delight and soothe and save him, by giving him a baby boy or girl very soon.

It was not the fault of the house that, within five weeks of the Manager's death, Reild went mad, cut Mrs. Reild's head almost off, with a razor, and then, turned suddenly sane by the deed, wrote a very plain letter to the grasping, money-grabbing Firm, and took his life—but it was a queer coincidence. . . .

So it was that Brinsleigh of the Forests should take the house, enter it in aggressive health and spirits, and die of Bright's disease within the year. Houses don't cause Bright's disease—nor do curses, nor any other supernatural agency. . . .

Old Mr. Johnson had earned two pensions, and was bound to die somewhere pretty soon—so his death in the house was perfectly natural. . . .

Retired Major Pomson had been a heavy drinker for years, and, when he died there of *delirium tremens*, babbling of throat-bound ghosts of women, nobody was surprised . . .

That Redman's wife should die there of cancer was not attributable to the house in any way whatever. . . .

Nor was it that the Bairdsleys' baby should die there of dysentery. Mrs. Bairdsley knew nothing about babies and fed it wrongly. . . .

Still, even before Mullen's case, some one nicknamed the house "Sudden-Death Lodge," and the name stuck. So did the house—empty.

Mullen was Queer himself—long before he took the house.

He was in love with a spirit that dwelt, not in a brandy-bottle, but in a gramophone.

Mullen had been made to do what no man should be made to do—live absolutely alone for three years in the jungle. He had gone into the jungle a sane, cheery, hopeful young man. He emerged an old one —and Queer.

He had taken a gramophone with him from Bombay, and a set of records, but though the gramophone reached the awful hut by the dreary border-line, the records lay at the bottom of a tributary of the playful River Indus with the bones of their bearer. All save one; for one had been accidentally left on the instrument and arrived with it.

It was a fine record—a beautiful love-song, beautifully sung by a woman.

And Mullen fell in love with her.

Within six months of "meeting" her, he thought of scarcely anything else, and he worshipped her as religious people worship God. . . . For she had saved him from a drunkard's death; she had saved him from suicide; more, she had saved him from a madhouse.

She had kept him regular, shaven, sober, smart, punctilious, and properly arrayed. She had made him dress for dinner every night. She had made him quit pyjamas when he quitted bed. She had made him behave and dress precisely as though there were a lady living in the house—a lady who was neither sister nor wife nor servant, a lady toward whom one must be punctiliously ceremonious and strictly regardful of etiquette and convention.

At first, when he had discovered the loss of the records, he had cursed his luck and left the gramophone

in its leather case. Many an evening he had glanced at it and decided to send to Bombay for a stock. But records cost money, transport to the most damnable Back of the most accursed Beyond costs more, and months would elapse between order and receipt —if they ever were received. Besides, he was heavily in debt, and saving hard. . . .

He had soon taken to breakfasting in pyjamas and to dining in riding-kit. One Sunday evening he realized that he had breakfasted, lunched, and dined in pyjamas. He soon wore rusty spurs and cared not whether boots were cleaned. . . . He began to grow a beard. . . . His nails were not as nice as they might have been. . . . He grew daily, or rather, nightly, fonder of whisky. . . . He smoked too much. . . . He realized, one day, that he was eating sardines out of the box without assistance from plate or fork. . . . Soon he began to talk to himself. . . . Then he became Queer. The day he decided to look out for a temporary and native wife, and see if she could keep him from suicide, he opened the case of the gramophone intending to amuse himself until "dinner" by watching the revolving-table of the machine silently revolve!

And then he had found the record, and his reason was saved—partly at any rate, for he always remained Queer. Thanking God, humbly and gratefully, he started the gramophone, and the beautiful voice rang out through the hideous deadly hut and beautiful deadly jungle. When it ended, Mullen's lips worked, he swallowed, a tear dripped on to his hand as he rewound the machine—and then he went into the other room, shaved and dressed for dinner, with long tails and a white tie. . . . He did not take to the dinner-

jacket and black tie until the white ties were done, and those he had improvised out of a torn-up shirt proved a failure. . . .

He dined with the gramophone opposite to him, and, when he had finished, asked Her if She would favour him with a song in the "drawing-room."

The "drawing-room" was a bare, mud-floored, wasps'-nested, white-ant-riddled verandah; but he did his best with it. A coloured silk handkerchief over a camp chair, a bunch of wild-flowers, his bed-cover for a carpet, a pink blotting-paper table-"cloth," all helped.

And then She sang to him in the moonlight and he broke down and cried.

Next day, he rose before dawn, shaved, dressed as though he were still at Trinity, and then went and said "Good-morning" to Her and begged Her to favour him with a song.

She did.

Then he put all his whisky bottles in a row and fired at them with his light rifle, till all were smashed.

She sat at breakfast with him—or rather the gramophone was on the table before him, and he ate decorously.

After breakfast he refrained from smoking, lest the smoke trouble Her throat and injure Her voice.

When he rode out he was as smart as though he were taking his Chief's daughter for a ride round Jakko or along the Kennedy Sea Face, or down the Mall. His boots were highly polished, his spurs shone, his riding-breeches were immaculate, and he wore a smartly tied stock with a good pin.

He brought Her back some wild-flowers, listened

to Her before dinner, dined with Her and forbore to smoke. She sang to him again after dinner.

He lived happy, on a high plane of thought and conduct, a devout lover.

One day, a cold pang shot through his heart and he sat down trembling. *How long would the record last? How many "needles" had he?*

Well—there proved to be seven hundred and sixty-six needles left out of the thousand, and he remembered hearing that a good record lasted "for months." He must economize in needles—but never use the same one twice. That would be penny wise and pound foolish, and injure Her record.

He must only ask Her to sing to him once daily, now. He dreamed of Her at night and sat in Her presence by day. She travelled with him when he made his tours of inspection, and, of course, had Her own tent. Had a train-load of the latest and finest records arrived at his door, he would not have unpacked them. . . . It was Her voice he loved, She whom he worshipped, her voice that had called him back from the edge of the Pit, She who had saved his life and kept him a gentleman.

He did his work well and, in time, was released from the devilish exile beyond exile, and was transferred to Karabad—very Queer. . . .

Finding he hated to meet men and feared to meet women, he chose the loneliest, most desolate, and shunned bungalow he could find.

This was Mr. Potwallah's house, Sudden-Death Lodge, of evil repute.

Here he dwelt with Her, and gradually grew more accustomed to seeing men and women and to being addressed by them.

The first night that he spent at a dinner-party was far less enjoyable than the night he spent unarmed in the same trap-pit with a staked panther.

Men called him Mad Mullen, and said, "Well, Sudden-Death Lodge will soon kill him, poor chap."

One night he sat listening to Her, when suddenly he looked over his shoulder and beheld her, dressed in white, with Her throat bound and swathed. He sprang to his feet open-mouthed, stepped back as she approached, and knocked over the little "occasional" table on which the gramophone stood. . . .

He was found dead next day, lying with his arms about a wrecked gramophone and with the two parts of a broken record in his hands. On his face was frozen a look of unutterable grief. Heart failure was the verdict.

Medical Science does not recognize heart-break as a cause of death. Mullen died of the shock of grief that followed the cessation, for ever, of Her voice.

Then Horatio Hamilton Harris, educationist, took the house because he ardently desired to see a ghost, and because he was not ardently enamoured of life. Within three months he was appointed Principal of the Government High School at Husseinabad, and departed in perfect health and spirits. If he ever "saw" anything he never talked about it, but when a friend one day said *à propos* of ghosts:

"Only a liar, a lunatic, or a drunkard has ever seen a ghost," Horatio Hamilton Harris had remarked, "Hm! Wonder which of the three *I* am."

While the Reverend Benoni Guddle was leading the laugh of the sceptics, and pointing out, to all and sundry, that the last occupant had left Sudden-Death Lodge in rude health and obvious peace of mind,

came Everard Dainton, I.C.S., on special duty for a brief space, ere proceeding to Husseinabad in the capacity of Deputy Commissioner. Mrs. Dainton implored her husband to live in the hotel rather than take the "haunted" and unlucky house, and thereby finally clinched his determination to sojourn within its blood-stained walls.

After a few weeks' residence, Everard Dainton, I.C.S., Sybil his wife, and their son Reggie, proceeded to Husseinabad in excellent fettle.

Apparently, however, some one had been filling the child's head with "nonsense," and he made his father very angry by refusing to confess that he had been primed. He talked of a "bogey-man" and shivered as he described him.

The sceptical laughter of the Reverend Benoni Guddle was redoubled when this family escaped unscathed; and he persuaded a "honeymoon couple" of his acquaintance to take the house furnished, for their month at Karabad.

John Glassen, of the P.W.D., married Eleanor Brutt at Husseinabad, and they took train for Karabad; were met there by Mr. Guddle, and given tea by him and his wife under their first "roof," the ill-omened Sudden-Death Lodge.

Glassen was awakened that night by a loud shriek from his wife, and, as he sprang up, she fell back upon her pillow, while the arm that had been pointing at something, or nothing, dropped to her side.

She was quite dead, and her pretty face was no longer pretty. The Civil Surgeon said she had died of fright. Nightmare possibly—or imagination.

CHAPTER II

HELL-FIRE-AND-SUDDEN-DEATH LODGE, KARABAD, INDIA

SUDDEN-DEATH LODGE stood empty, as well it might, for many a long day, until suddenly the inhabitants of the Karabad Cantonment were much intrigued to see signs of activity about its dreary precincts. Whitewashers were at work, tile-layers were renewing the broken half-cylinder tiles of its roof, broken panes of glass were replaced, the drive was weeded, and finally, furniture was taken in.

Sudden-Death Lodge had been taken as a " chummery " by four subalterns of a newly arrived regiment that would lie in Karabad for some months and for a special reason.

There were Messrs. Ffoulkes-Smythe, Branter, Wolversholme, and Nordean, second-lieutenants belonging to, or attached to, The Princess Royal's Own South Westmoreland Fusiliers.

These gentlemen were attracted by the popular name for the house, and enlarged and improved that name to Hell-Fire-and-Sudden-Death Lodge.

It is the merest coincidence in the world that none of them was alive at the end of the year, but it is a fact nevertheless.

Mr. Ffoulkes-Smythe dreamed a dream one night, after dining (and wining) with the Gunners and hearing all about the Fakir's Curse and the bungalow's history, with embellishments.

He described the dream to his " stable companions " next morning, possibly with embellishments also.

"I say, you fellows," quoth Mr. Ffoulkes-Smythe, "it's working."

"Then have nothing to do with it," said Mr. Nordean. "Avoid anyone or anything that works. What is it?"

"Why, the spell," replied Mr. Ffoulkes-Smythe. "Last night in my chaste dreams I beheld the old original firm that started the Cuss—the genuine Fakir."

"Was the old bird riding a lobster salad and shooting *pâté de foie gras* with a loaded champagne-bottle?" inquired Mr. Wolversholme.

"No," answered the dreamer. "He was a-squatting alongside a roly-poly-shaped tomb under a pipal tree in which were stuck flags and rags and things. When he saw me he hopped up and yelled

'Earth and air,
Fire and water'

over and over again."

"Talked English, did he?" inquired Mr. Branter.

"He did so. And that's funny too," was the reply.

"Then he wasn't a genuine, Kennel-Club-pedigree fakir." . . .

A few days later Mr. Nordean somewhat surprised the others by observing, during dinner:—

"No. No cheese. It makes me dream, or something else does. Rotten. Horrid. Ugh!" . . .

"What did you dream, Bishop?" enquired Mr. Ffoulkes-Smythe.

"Oh, fakirs and sudden dissolution. I suppose I had been thinking of your dream just before I fell asleep."

Three pairs of eyes watched his ingenuous countenance.

"I dreamt I saw this beastly Fakir-Johnnie, and there was the tomb all right, like a bally bolster on a plinth, and the pipal tree and green flags and things. . . . But you three fellows were lying in a neat row and labelled respectively *Earth*, *Air*, and *Fire*. I believe Ffoulkey was Earth, Wolf was Air, and Branter, Fire. . . . And suddenly the old blighter rose up, pointed a skinny claw at me, and yelled 'Water.' But he didn't *want* water. He was threatening me with death by water, and I clearly understood the fact."

"I daresay you *would* die if you drank water by mistake, one day," observed Mr. Branter.

"Anyhow, I shan't go swimming, in the light of this dream and the record of this bungalow," continued Mr. Nordean.

"I don't see how you *could* swim in the light of a dream nor yet in the record of a bungalow," put in Mr. Ffoulkes-Symthe.

"I shan't swim in water if I can help it, just at present—nor yet embark on it," amended the second dreamer.

"Well, you'll probably get enteric through water, somehow," said Mr. Wolversholme soothingly. "You are bound to get water in your mouth sooner or later."

"And I suppose I am to avoid treading on earth, Wolversholme is to dispense with air, and Branter is to avoid playing with fire? What?" commented Mr. Ffoulkes-Smythe.

"If so, the fakir has got us," he continued. "I shall have a white coffin with pure silver handles—for innocence."

But Mr. Ffoulkes-Smythe was buried without any coffin at all, as it happened.

He disappeared off the face of the earth as completely as if a fiery chariot and horses had taken him up bodily to heaven, and, for long, ingenuity exhausted itself in suggestion as to what had become of him.

Can any sane and sober man say the house had anything to do with the following?

Blame the hunt; blame the horse; blame the coolies; blame the mist; but don't blame the poor house.

One morning, some months after the dream, Mr. Ffoulkes-Smythe arose from his bed at the unreasonable hour of three, and donned his smartest riding-kit—black top-boots with short-necked spurs, white cords, dark-grey riding-coat displaying narrow border of yellow waistcoat, white stock and white felt *topi*. He was known to have worn this dress and by this dress was he known—months later.

At 3.30, having swallowed tea, toast, and an egg, he mounted Pullman—his alleged T.B.,-b.w.g.,-rising six, hunter—and rode to the Zoological Gardens.

And why to the Zoological Gardens? *Magna est veritas et prævalebit.* The Karabad Hunt had destroyed nearly all the local jackals and was obliged, not only to import and turn down these pleasing animals, but to run a bag-man at least once a week.

It was a dark secret, of course, and when General Sir Henry Balder, passing through Karabad and staying with the M.F.H. came out for a run, was in at the death, and remarked, "Stinks like a dam toffee-shop," as a powerful odour of aniseed hung in the still and heavy air, it was felt that he had been unkind, critical, blunt, almost indecent. For the majority of the runs were not after bag-men. . . .

However, it was bag-man this morning, and Mr.

Ffoulkes-Smythe rode to the Zoological Gardens, along the hard white road, which, in the starlight, he could just see; for moon there was none.

A burly Mohammedan squatting beneath a sheet and beside a lantern, rose as he approached the wicket-gate of the wall of the Gardens, salaamed, and preceded the rider to where, in a remote and discreet corner of the grounds, behind coolies' huts, fodder stacks, and litter, lurked a low unobtrusive little cage suggestive of a hen-coop.

As the lamp was approached to the bars of the cage, uneasy, gliding, sneaking forms scuttled to and fro, tried to hide behind each other, burrowed ineffectually under wisps of hay, crouched in corners, or lay flat. Bright little eyes gleamed, white sharp little teeth shone, quick ears pricked, lay back, twitched. Jackals are of a remarkably retiring disposition.

The man crouched, opened the door, thrust in a long hairy arm and suddenly seized a jackal by the scruff of the neck, as one would a kitten. Opening a large bag, or small sack, which he carried, he thrust the struggling beast into it, tied the neck of the sack securely, and handed it to Mr. Ffoulkes-Smythe. That gentleman took reins and hunting-crop in one hand, and, with the other, slung and held the sack over his shoulder.

As he trotted off, human eye beheld him, living, for the last time—the eye of Ibrahim Daoud, shikari and hunt-servant.

It was Mr. Ffoulkes-Smythe's custom to canter out into the open country, to some spot previously fixed upon by the Master of Hounds, and there to untwist from his waist a few yards of line, at the end of which was a small bundle of rags. The bundle of rags

he would then anoint with a portion of the contents of a bottle of aniseed, drop it on the ground, and canter off in a pre-arranged direction for a couple of miles or so, dragging it behind him. He would then halt, dismount, and feel for the head of the interned jackal. Having got a grip of its neck, he would open the sack and disclose its person. This done he would drop aniseed upon its feet and tail—and let it go. Rejoicing in its new-found freedom, and oblivious of the ever-lengthening but invisible chain that bound it to the spot, the beast would lose no time in putting a considerable distance between itself and the scenes of its sorrow. That done, it would seek the shelter of a friendly nullah and there rest and rejoice—until it heard the hounds.

But this particular jackal had a worse fate, and it was not his to enjoy a brief freedom and sudden hot death—or brave escape.

And this was due to the trenches, deep and wide, dug near the new military rest-camp, since Mr. Ffoulkes-Smythe last passed this way, and ordered to be filled in before daylight that day.

Pullman never did like jackals, and he always justified his name, by more than ordinary, when his master carried one. Nor did he like sober trotting and cantering on a bitter cold morning, and the prospect of the hunt excited him. Moreover, Master had only one hand and couldn't re-arrange the reins very well when he wanted to do so. It was pitch dark, owing to a morning mist.

So Pullman pulled, and as he felt the curb he checked with a jerk ; he danced and " tittupped " and " barged about," and when he felt the admonishing spur he leapt forward as though starting off in a point-to-

point. He was into a hard gallop in no time, when, suddenly, just as Master was getting a haul on the curb, a great grave yawned before him—a grave indeed—with a big mound on the far side. No, he couldn't take it, with Master pulling at his mouth—and poor Master never saw it. He spread his feet, dropped his head, stopped dead—and shot Mr. Ffoulkes-Smythe over his head into the trench.

As Master didn't take any further steps in the matter, Pullman went for a jolly gallop before going home.

What Master needed was cold water on head and wrist, brandy, and general "first-aid," or possibly more serious medical assistance. . . .

"Hurry brothers," said Arjun Bhangi to his gang a few minutes later, "'twill be daylight in a couple of hours."

As the first shovelful of earth pattered on his face Mr. Ffoulkes-Smythe moved very slightly.

It was still pitch dark.

"*Shahbash*, my brothers!" said Arjun Bhangi to his gang, "a devil in the form of a horse leapt out of this trench and galloped away—we heard it,—therefore fill it quickly." They worked hard and they filled it quickly.

It is quite possible that Mr. Ffoulkes-Smythe never knew that he was buried alive.

The disappearance of Mr. Ffoulkes-Smythe cast something approaching a gloom over the "chummery" at Hell-Fire-and-Sudden-Death Lodge.

Nor was this lightened by the extraordinary and tragic accident that befell Mr. Nordean a little later.

One night—after a merry dinner-party in the bungalow, a dinner-party at which extreme gaiety had

seemed to mark a reaction from despondency—when the guests had departed, Mr. Nordean observed:

"Well, I am going to have a little one and so to bed. Can you fellows open soda-water bottles with one finger?"

"No—nor can you," replied Mr. Branter.

In point of fact Mr. Nordean could. Sometimes he could do it with one hand, sometimes he inserted the finger and pressed it with the other hand. Sometimes he did this and banged the bottle hard upon the table. It depended upon the pressure of gas in the bottle, which, we are credibly informed, varies in different bottles, and even in the same bottle at different temperatures.

Mr. Nordean took a soda-water bottle in his right hand, inserted his index finger and pressed. . . . No result. . . . He exerted his utmost strength . . . No result. . . . Placing his left hand over his bent right finger, he pressed with all his force and used his weight. . . . No result. . . . It was a very high-pressure specimen, and it was a very hot night.

The others jeered.

Raising the bottle a foot above the table, Mr. Nordean essayed to bang it down with sufficient violence to cause his left hand to drive the inserted finger and the glass ball beyond the rubber ring and into the lower reaches of the neck. . . . He smote. . . .

There was a loud explosion as the bottle burst. . . . The R.A.M.C. did its able utmost for Mr. Nordean, but when a considerable fragment of glass has entered the brain *via* the eye, the utmost is but little.

Can a house be held responsible for the bursting of mishandled soda-water bottles beneath its roof?

But it *was* an unlucky house.

Messrs. Branter and Wolversholme left it. They said, truly, that they did not believe in curses nor in "unlucky" houses, but the place reminded them too painfully of their pals, Ffoulkes-Smythe and Nordean. Mr. Wolversholme went home on leave, shortly after, and was one of the first army aviators to meet his death while aeroplaning.

This happened 7000 miles from the unfortunate house, and yet there were people who coupled its name with that of the dead soldier.

Mr. Branter sobered down considerably and became remarkably keen on his profession. He studied the vernacular very hard indeed. In fact he studied anything, and seemed to dislike leisure, idleness, his own company, and aimless solitude. He appeared to have a feverish desire for employment, work, activity, society, and whatever helped to keep him from brooding. . . .

He rode very recklessly and shikarred panthers on foot by moonlight. On one occasion he planted a camp-stool two yards from a "kill" and sat with his rifle across his knee all night, there being no moon at all. The panther came, as he had expected, down the wind from the jungle, and he shot it by sound rather than sight, as it tore at its "kill."

As his vernacular examination drew near, he obtained examination-leave and went with his *munshi*[1] right away from Karabad to a big village where he would hear nothing but Urdu, and where it would be useless to speak English.

Here he conversed with all sorts and conditions of men in the language he was studying, as well as with the *munshi*, and made great progress.

[1] Clerk. Language-teacher.

To him one day spake the *munshi*, and said :

" Would your honour care to visit a native theatre to-night and endeavour to follow a play in the vernacular ? The place is not a quarter of a mile from your honour's camp."

" I didn't know that this hole boasted a theatre," said Mr. Branter.

" Oh, no, your honour," replied the *munshi*, " there is no theatre, but a play is being enacted in the court-yard of a friend of mine who lives here."

" What—in the open air ? "

" No, sir," said the man, " the court-yard has high stone walls and he has had a roof made, with plaited palm-leaves put over it, and a ceiling-cloth. He has had a beautiful wooden stage built, and the floor hidden from sight with *dhurries*.[1] He is a wealthy and pious gentleman, and this is the last night of his great festival period. There will be a thousand people there."

" Smelly," observed Mr. Branter.

On turning the matter over in his mind, he decided that it would be a good test of progress in Urdu if he went, listened attentively, made notes, and then repeated the story in Urdu next day to the *munshi*.

His decision was almost reversed by receipt of the information that the play began at midnight and was guaranteed to last for some hours.

However, he was not in the habit of reversing his decisions, especially since he had " turned serious," and a most pressing and complimentary invitation from the said wealthy and pious gentleman settled the matter.

[1] Cotton carpets.

At a few minutes before midnight, accompanied by the obsequious and delighted *munshi*, Mr. Branter strolled over from his tents to the scene of the festivity. Guidance was unnecessary, for a garish light and the sound of "music" made night hideous and perturbed his soul.

Arrived at a strong high narrow gate in the lofty wall, the subaltern was met by his host, garlanded with moribund tuberoses, anointed with stale rose-water, daubed on the back of the hand with a pungent scent, and conducted to the seat of honour.

These painful honours and attentions Mr. Branter received with the ready, pleased cordiality of a gentleman, and not with the bored condescension of an upstart cad. The large crowd of upwards of a thousand people was undoubtedly and unfeignedly glad to see the Sahib, and felt his visit to be an honour. It was almost wholly composed of the class which forms some two to three hundred millions of India's population—the unrepresented class which knows, and thanks its many gods for, what it owes to Britain.

Taking stock of his surroundings with observant military eye, Mr. Branter noted that he was in a fort-like building; that the big door by which he had entered was closed, bolted, and barred against importunate undesirables; that there was no exit from the court-yard, save into the house itself, by way of a small door; that there were nearly two "battalions" of people present, men, women, and children; that he would certainly have to stay where he was until the show was over; and that the flaring lamps were a great deal too near the temporary roof of rafters, thatch, palm-leaves, and ceiling-cloth. . . .

The play began. Mr. Branter concentrated his

attention upon the actors and endeavoured to lose no word and miss no point.

He wished those talkers behind would shut up. Getting noisier. Confound them! what was up? A woman shrieked. He looked up. The roof was smoking, smouldering—he sprang to his feet—it was on fire.

Fire! Fire! Fire!

Branter jumped on his chair.

"Sit down!" he bawled. "Sit down! Sit *down*, you fools. I will open the door and hold it till all are out."

It is on record that King Canute once ordered the tide to cease its flow.

Had a thousand coins been shaken from a sack over the crowd by the door not one would have reached the ground. A perfectly solid mass of people was jammed against the entire length of the high wall in which the door was.

And the door opened inwards.

Of that assembly a large proportion died there of the pressure, and more of smoke-suffocation.

In an incredibly brief space of time, the whole roof was on fire, the house was on fire, the stage was on fire.

The heat was roasting and there was more smoke than air.

The small door leading into the house was soon choked, and a maddened band rushed round and round the court-yard like stampeded horses. Mr. Branter soon saw that he might as well shout to the fire as to the people.

What could he do for the poor demented creatures, who might all have escaped by five minutes' coolness

and discipline? . . . Had they been his regiment, not a soul would have been singed, thought he.

Behind and beneath the stage was a huge earthenware *chattie* of water, with a brass dipper, placed there for drinking purposes. . . . As well try and set fire to the sea with a match as try to do anything to the fire with this gallon of water. . . . But he could drench his clothes and go where these cotton-clad lunatics could not.

He soaked himself from head to foot and dashed to the small door. . . The big one was hidden by a pile of dead and dying, and a surging crowd that trampled the pile. If a few more died there, the survivors would almost be able to scale the wall!

Instead of pushing, as all his predecessors had done, he pulled—pulled away corpse after corpse and dying men and women, under a rain of fire. . . . One or two helped later—the way was cleared and the helpers dashed through the doorway and disappeared into the burning house, some escaping by windows that looked out in the opposite direction.

There would be another jam in a moment. "One at a time!" he shouted—of course in vain.

He felled a man who dashed a child from his path, and, arming himself with a chance-found hammer, left by the stage-carpenter presumably, he contrived to keep a flow of fugitives through the doorway. . . .

He wondered if he had been at it for an hour or a day or a year. . . .

Four minutes had elapsed between the first flame and the departure of the last person able to walk. . . . Mr. Branter stood in an inferno. . . . Hell was *above* for once, he reflected, and it must fall in a minute.

He rushed to the ghastly heap by the big door. . . . All dead? . . . A child's body twitched—apparently she had fainted in the crush and had been relieved of pressure as he shouted that the way was clear, . . . Half the poor devils might be alive for all he knew! . . . If he could only get them out! . . .

He picked up the little girl—a skinny mite of eight wearing the *sari* of wedded womanhood.

Into the house he dashed, blundered blindly ahead, crossed two rooms, stumbled over bodies, felt a draught of air and reached a barred aperture or unglazed window. Depositing the child he wrenched the bars asunder, tore some from their sockets, bent others, made an opening and stuffed the body through, head first, and let it fall—feet first.

Back he fled to the court-yard, wherein the stench of burning flesh was terrible.

How long would the centre beam of the roof hold, and how long would the house stand?

Also, how long could he keep his feet and draw his breath? . . . This was certainly hell.

He tried to pick up the body of a woman, apparently unburned and possibly living.

Too heavy for his failing strength.

He dragged her to the house by one arm.

Safe inside, he left her and sought another exit, for he could not get her body through those bars. . . . A windowless room. A passage. An unbarred window! . . . Returning to the body, he dragged it to the window, propped it erect, thrust the arms across the sill, raised the lower part of the body and heaved. As it toppled outwards he seized an arm and let the feet go first. It seemed a terrible idea that he might save her from fire and break her neck.

Why didn't the cowards come and help him? What was the use of fleeing to the village and yelling for the help that they themselves could give? . . . A chain of resolute men could yet pass out scores before the house burnt down! . . .

What a damned trap it was, with its high walls, burning roof, inward door, and burning house!

How sweet the air was by the window.

Surely he might go now? He had saved scores of lives by clearing the little doorway and marshalling the fools. . . . He returned to the inferno and seized another body—as the roof fell.

Sudden-Death Lodge stood empty for months.

CHAPTER III

A SCHOLAR AND A GENTLEMAN

MR. RAMSWAMI GANGANATH DAGGA was a very interesting personage, whether viewed as a repulsively ugly and filthy mendicant, ash-smeared, sitting in the dust of the road-side; as a religious preceptor, as a politician of parts and power, as a reincarnation of a deity, as a vile and ruffianly swindler, as a philosopher, or as a Graduate of the University of Cambridge and successful candidate for the Examination for admission to His Majesty's Indian Civil Service.

For Mr. Dagga was all these and much more.

Unfortunately, the most remarkable of the doings of Mr. Ramswami cannot be told, as they do not bear telling, but a certain interest, as hinted, attaches to many that can.

Ramswami Ganganath Dagga first saw the light in a little mud-walled village, of which his papa was the priest. Papa was indeed of the priesthood priestly, for he was about the one-hundredth of his race who had ministered unto the spiritual needs of the villagers of that same village. And a very holy man was Ganganath Ramchandra Dagga, and a greatly respected, as being both that and a determined and prosperous scoundrel. Admiration and regard were his portion in meed of his intimacy with the Gods, his subtilty in villainy, and his unweariness in ill-doing. Justification by Faith was his and Justification by the success of his Works. So, before his fellows he walked not humbly, for they praised both; and before his Gods he walked not delicately, for Works interested them not at all.

A type of crime that had never been committed nor hatched nor condoned, connived at, abetted, instigated, nor attempted by Papa Dagga would be a very choice and novel article indeed. He possessed no heart, a great brain, a greater stomach, no conscience, and a very handsome banking account at an English bank administered by Scottish gentlemen. But in spite of the paternal banking account and a considerable hoard of rupees and jewellery buried beneath the temple floor, Master Dagga ran about arrayed in hair-oil and a little antimony—daubed round his eyes to make them big and beautiful and, incidentally, to keep away the flies—and was in nowise distinguishable from a score of other village brats that rolled naked in the dirt, rode astride their mothers' hips, and somehow avoided pestilence, famine, and sudden death from reptile, beast, insect and incredibly insanitary conditions of existence.

In due course the little Ramswami went to school, and, sitting upon the mud floor, made hieroglyphics of the meaning of which he was ignorant.

Sometimes they were called "figures" and sometimes "letters" by his preceptor, but this did not disturb him at all. He copied them very nicely and won well-deserved praise.

He also learnt History and Geography.

There was a very fine Rajah named Akbar. He asked his Papa if he had ever seen him when he went to Allapore, but was told that he had not. He also learnt of an interesting district where the ground was white, and colder than iron is in the early mornings. He decided to get his father to take a *ticcut* and go there by *terain* for the day, next time an outing was toward. The teacher was a shameless liar, of course, in saying that the earth rested upon nothing, and in teaching similar silly superstitions. What had become of the Great Serpent then, in the name of sober truth?

Personally he did not mind listening to the funny twaddle about the shadow of the earth falling upon the moon, and the moon coming between the earth and the sun, when there was an eclipse, but why waste time and perhaps offend the Gods—a serious thing for those others who were not priests' sons—when any fool knew that Ráhu the Demon devours the sun, or tries to, until Vishnu attends to him.

The psychology of the little Ramswami would form interesting reading to anyone given to pondering such stuff as Psychology. . . He had no experiences nor knowledge to which to refer the astonishing statements of his pedagogue—who himself neither understood nor believed the alien profitless matter he was underpaid to dole out—and he could form no mental

images of what was described to him, generally poorly and erroneously. It had no reality nor actuality; his mind never gripped nor absorbed it; it furnished no food for thought; it was not of his life, and had no relation to, nor real place in, his life. He did not understand it nor believe it—he merely learnt the words of it by heart, with astounding rapidity and accuracy.

Once, in the top class, he got high praise from a native gentleman—a barrister-at-law, who had come to see his father, all the way from Calbay—for saying, "Northumblandurhamyark-Lincunarfoke-Suffokesex-kent," and then "Tweed-forth-tay-dee-don-spay," crowning all with "Londonliverpool-Bristolull."

He sometimes wondered what it meant, but there was so much of it nowadays that there was little time to wonder. One had to *learn* it, not waste time in thinking what it meant. Anyhow it was obviously all lies and very poor profitless lying—and why should one exert oneself to lie without profit?

Does any sensible person lie without a motive any more than he refrains from lying when he has a motive?

But the motive and the profit appeared anon when the phenomenon known as a "ishkarlaship" dawned upon the delighted consciousness of Master Ramswami Ganganath Dagga.

It transpired that the boy most fluent in the humorous bosh about eclipses being caused by the moon and by the earth's shadow, instead of by the demon Ráhu; about the world being round; about a queer lot of water called the sea; and impious nonsense about small-pox being caused by a little animal, instead of being a direct manifestation of the great and awful Goddess Kali—as any fool knew it was

—actually got money for it! . . . Could folly further go? . . . But that was no reason why a sensible boy should not have a try for it.

Master Dagga was well aware that he could amass the nonsense as fast as any boy of his age, and it would be a queer thing and a quaint, if any local examiner would dare and presume to put a deliberate and wanton affront on Ganganath Ramchandra Dagga, Priest of Palegaon, by giving the Scholarship to another, when *his* son aspired to it!

So Master Dagga acquired the textbooks guaranteed to contain all the matter prescribed by the humorists who invented the funny "ishkarlaship" notion, and in a surprisingly brief space of time knew them *verbatim* from cover to cover.

Inasmuch as he knew the books by heart and also the examination questions before they were issued—both by grace of a friendly compositor who, clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful, sat on the type when it was set up, and of his preceptor who developed an unsuspected vein of accurate prophecy the night before each paper appeared—it is not surprising that Master Dagga won the Scholarship and embarked upon what another preceptor later termed "the thorny and indigestible sea of Higher Education." Before departing to Karabad to take up his Scholarship in the High School of that city, he was informed that Papa Dagga found the time auspicious to celebrate the marriage of this his distinguished second son, now attained to the years of discretion which are twelve, and much enhanced in marriage-market value by his recent academic performance and proof of his popularity with the high gods.

The bride-elect was rather old—being indeed eight

years of age—but parental gold can gild filial blemishes, and, if Ganganath Ramchandra Dagga chose to wed his son to an old maid of eight, who should dare to sneer or jeer?

The wedding lasted for a fortnight, and did not do Master Dagga any sort or kind of mental, moral, or physical good, but it swelled Mr. Dagga's banking account notably. And then the boy departed from the ancestral halls of wattle and daub, and entered upon his career in the Great World as represented by the city of Karabad.

The Government High School of Karabad was not possessed of a boarding-house or hostel, but it was of a fine old crusted reputation for passing more and younger boys through the Matriculation Examination of the Ahmedgunge University than any other school in the Province whose pride and boast the University is. True, not two per cent of these boys had the slightest possibility or intention of proceeding to the University, or had any sort or kind of use for the curious collection of miscomprehended and erroneous matter they crammed by the process of scribbling down inaccurately what their preceptors gabbled unintelligibly, and learning it by heart—but what would you? Surely if you pass a paper examination you are an Educated Person, and if you don't you are not? If you get a B.A. degree why, you *are* a B.A., and the fact that you cannot write a plain letter in fair writing and without a large number of errors in spelling, grammar, syntax, and idiom, is merely irrelevant. It is also wholly irrelevant that you are incredibly ignorant outside the nine text-books that you have learned by heart, and that in the process of learning them by heart while underfed, ill-housed, and growing fast, you

have acquired consumption, chronic dyspepsia, and short sight. . . .

Master Dagga was welcomed to the Karabad Government High School by the Head Master, Mr. Aswatthanarayana Narayenaswami Dhupeshwarkar, M.A., LL.B., and told that his whole duty was now to get another Scholarship, and then to be the youngest boy who had ever Matriculated in the history of Boy. Master Dagga did not know that the exhortation was a stock one, and had been given to just as many boys as Mr. Aswatthanarayana Narayenaswami Dhupeshwarkar, M.A., LL.B., had admitted to the school. He took it as a personal tribute, swelled a little more with pride, and determined to justify the great man's hope and confidence.

He then sought him a lodging where he could learn by heart a Model Essay (and reproduce it next day *verbatim* as his own), what time a dozen people sat in the same verandah all around him, wrangling, gossiping, quarrelling, and love-making.

Men might come and men might go, but Master Dagga crammed on for ever, undisturbed. And daily his appalling stock of incredibly useless knowledge grew, and his wonderful memory increased and became more and more hypertrophied at the expense of his intelligence, initiative, originality, and general nervous activity, his morality and his physique. At school he waxed in favour, for, with him, to hear was to remember, to read a few times was to know by heart, and to be asked was to answer with fearful fluency. Generally he "studied" (that is, doggedly repeated until he was word perfect) from about seven in the evening until midnight, at which witching hour he would relax and join in social converse with his hos-

tess, her satellites and their visitors, until compelled by drowsiness to curl up and sleep the sleep of the just on the spot where he had satisfied his intellectual needs.

A corner of the verandah was the small boy's dining-room, dressing-room, study, bedroom, library, and drawing-room, as a similar corner of a similar verandah is the entire home-sweet-home of thousands of other Indian "students." It was furnished with a bed consisting of a low wooden frame across which a fibre-rope was interlaced, a small brass vessel holding half a pint, which served as bath and drinking vessel; a platter; a very flourishing, active, and pushful community of fleas; a quiet but business-like tribe of bugs—inhabiting a leg of the bed—and a malodorous atmosphere that almost defied the Law of Gases and nearly presented itself as a Solid to the naked eye.

And suddenly his father died, and this eligible residence for a single gentleman became a beautiful dream!

Mr. Ganganath Ramchandra Dagga departed this life with suddenness, assisted by the entry into his capacious stomach, not by way of his mouth, of a portion of a brass lock, some nails, a trifle of telegraph wire, a small bolt, a few screws, an iron nut, and assorted leaden details. He died, engaged upon one of those Works which, by the purists of some narrow religions, are held to militate against complete Salvation, in spite of Faith. . . .

An old Mohammedan dame was known to have received a considerable sum of money, in coined rupees, by the sale of a piece of property, and Mr. Dagga held that it would be better placed beneath his temple

floor, or eke in the National Bank of India beneath his own sign-manual, than in the coffers of a cow-killing infidel, and female to boot.

Accordingly he arranged a dacoity with certain of the elders of his congregation, and, upon a night, these oriental Robin Hoods, duly disguised as Mohammedans, essayed the onfall, deeming that the leaguer of a fat old woman, her dislodgment and a trifle of merry torture, should be a safe, remunerative, and enjoyable little evening's diversion. But alas for the damnable guile, treachery, and lawlessness of old Mohammedan women! . . . The shameless daughter of a noseless mother and a burnt father had her son staying with her—a vile sepoy of the 125th Mekranis, arrived home on furlough that very day, and the unspeakable old hag actually possessed a fire-arm in spite of the Arms Act!

It was a wonderful weapon, like an iron water-pipe and greatly wire-bound as to the worm-eaten woodwork. Natheless it had a wondrous cubic capacity. . . .

"The times are evil, Light of my Life," quoth Bibi Fatima, "and there be many dacoities these days, by those who say the proceeds are for the salvation of India and who apply them to the fattening of jewelled swine. Thy name is a tower of strength and a terror to giants, but there be those who know not that the sun of thy face now shineth here—so load the fire-stick." . . . A grin illuminated the sun of the face of Havildar Abdullah Khan as he handled the ancient relic.

"Nay, Fountain of Delight and Desire of Kings," said he, "the little *bandook* would kill an elephant before it and the man behind it."

"Load it, Light of mine Eyes," answered Bibi Fatima, and Abdullah Khan laboriously removed the nickel-coated bullets from certain Lee-Metford cartridges—the reward of care and wiliness on the rifle-range—and procured a quantity of cordite. Being a prudent man he diluted this notoriously impulsive material with powdered match-heads, tipped a measure of the mixture adown the bell-mouthed barrel, rammed and wadded it, and then added the afore-mentioned selection of missiles—chiefly to please the belligerent old lady. For the sake of artistic completeness and reality, he picked out the hole of communication between the pan and the barrel, with the picker, attached by a chain to the stock, filled the pan with cordite, carefully shut the clamp down over it, and screwed a nice pointed flint between the clasps of the hammer.

"There, Ornament of Courts and Abode of Virtue," said the burly soldier, "'twill now blow a whole gang of dacoits to Gehennum, and so well intermingled that the devils will scarce sort them out again," and he stood the fearsome engine against his string cot in the outer room.

And thus it fell out that when an infernal hullabaloo suddenly broke out at midnight in the village, and blows rained upon the door of Bibi Fatima's house, the said door was speedily opened, and, to the astounded and scandalized dacoits, appeared a stalwart form with a shout of "*Harlt! Who kom dar?*" immediately followed by an ear-splitting roar as the blunderbuss discharged its assortment of old iron, brass, and lead into the internal economy of Mr. Ganganath Ramchandra Dagga at five yards' range. . . .

The bold dacoits fled septemvious, and Bugoomal

Ganganath Dagga, eldest son of Ganganath Ramchandra Dagga, suddenly deceased of apoplexy and quickly cremated, became Priest of Palegaon and walked in his father's footsteps.

Also he unearthed the store of rupees and jewellery, withdrew the deposits from the bank, and thenceforth assisted the embarrassed at ten per cent per mensem, or one hundred and twenty per annum. To the little Ramswami at Karabad, he intimated that he would be pleased to support his young and pretty wife and future family until such time as Ramswami could do so himself, and that he would always be welcome to bed and board for a while, but that he had no smallest intention of remitting him one farthing of money. Should he choose to return and make himself useful, he could do so, and live on the joint-family system, but if he preferred the idle and worthless career of a scholar he was at liberty to scratch for himself.

Ramswami scratched.

He liked his brother little and trusted him less. . . . Replying to the effect that when he returned it would be as an important salaried official with several uniformed Government peons and with the object of enquiring into his father's testamentary dispositions, he accepted the inevitable, abandoned his wife to her fate, and sought cheaper lodgings.

If he could get another verandah-corner for two rupees a month with interests in a lamp, he could beg most of his food, and trust to some unknown but inevitable Kind Gentleman for clothing and books.

Life had not been exactly sheltered, easy, wholesome, nor elevating before, but it had been almost so by comparison with what it became now. Through the recommendation of the " Ranee Sahiba," his land-

lady, he got another corner and another lamp, but the former corner was as a corner of Paradise to this, and the new lamp was but smoky—a hurricane lamp in fact, filled with cheap bazaar oil, and ill-trimmed as to wick. The Ranee Sahiba's lamp was a real hanging-lamp with a polished reflector through which the chimney passed, and it hung quite low on a brass chain much like the one in the temple at home. It knew nothing below real *Kampani* oil from the *Ishtores* too, and the gods protect the *hamal* who trimmed it ill, as though the Ranee Sahiba and her house were . . . But this wretched glim hung high up on a piece of bent iron wire, and, God knew, one's eyes and head ached enough without any extra strain.

However, beggars cannot be choosers, and what is written on the forehead is written. But everything was correspondingly inferior; the company was rough and rowdy, there was no peace all night, the police often came, no one respected a scholar, and such food as had to be procured there was horrible.

How hard it was to keep up the daily tale of bricks without straw, the blind cramming of facts without understanding, the sheer dogged memorizing of strange writings unillumined by one little ray of meaning! . . . How hard it was to sit down in the empty class-room, after six hours' work and no food, to do the written homework then and there, for lack of facilities at "home,"—and then to go "home" to cram for five hours in semi-darkness, in the midst of sordid orgies, drunken quarrels, and bestial sights and sounds! . . .

Ramswami grew very thin and weedy, and stooped badly. His chest became more and more concave as the years went by, and his back more and more convex.

It would have been difficult to place a finger on his body and say with certitude, "Here there is a muscle."

He left school without ever having kicked a football, hit a cricket ball, or patted a tennis ball. He had never once taken part in an organized game of any kind. Indeed he had never played at anything at all. He did not know what play was. But he passed the Matriculation Examination of the Ahmedgunge University at the age of fourteen, and won his second Scholarship at an age at which few boys had ever won it before.

And then, without changing his abode, he became a member of the Karabad Government College and came in contact with a European for the first time.

He had heard much of the Sahibs, and nothing to their credit. Little time had been his to read the vernacular press and no opportunity to read the English, but he knew that the Sahibs were violent men who lived on whisky, plundered the country, killed many Indians by kicking them to death, loved to insult and quarrel with all and sundry; had no decency and reticence in speaking the thing that was pleasant to the hearer rather than the thing that was true; were so unnatural as to give posts to strangers rather than to their own kith and kin or those who had obliged them—on the idle plea that the stranger happened to be the fitter man; were so grossly ill-mannered as to bare the head and cover the feet in the presence of gentlemen of their own or native race; were active as coolies though high-placed as Rajahs, were as strong as elephants and fierce as lions, ate flesh and had no caste, were devils of skill and cunning, were great in war, feared not death, were devoid of real religion; and maintained shameless

wives who went about bare-faced, ate at table with their lords, spoke to them without permission, and had not a square inch of veil wherewith to cover their brazen faces when addressed by a strange male.

Principal Bullsey did something to dispel some of these beliefs, but not very much, for he was not of the stuff of which great teachers are made, being utterly lacking in imagination, and hence in the primary essential, which is Sympathy.

Disliking his pupils, he was disliked by them. Ruling them with a rod of iron he was feared by them, and, since they were Orientals, greatly respected. Not one of them would have breathed a disparaging word of him—or given him a cup of cold water if he lay dying of thirst. Dr. Bullsey was a "strong" man, whose "strength" lay in unswerving and uncompromising refusal to change his mind when once made up—and he made up his mind very quickly and on very little evidence. His motto was, "I stand by what is right though the Heavens fall and what *I* think is right *is* right." He was an honest, steadfast, dull man, who caused much unnecessary pain and trouble by his "firmness" and hopeless lack of sympathy and understanding, and the narrow, stupid stubbornness of which he was so proud. Of any colleague who dared to think differently from himself on any point, he despaired utterly, and suffered not the fool gladly. When, by seniority, he became Director of Education for a space, he wrote of any subordinate who did not see eye to eye with him in all things, "He is devoid of common sense and discretion" when he made his confidential report to Government.

And Dagga *hated* him—hated him almost as much

as he feared him. From the day on which he was fool enough to admit that Dr. Bullsey's writing was illegible when Dr. Bullsey roared, "Do you mean to say you cannot understand plain English, my good fool—or do you mean that my writing is illegible?" . . . and Dr. Bullsey, snatching the paper from him, could not read it himself, nothing went right.

It was, of course, most aggravating of Dagga, and none the less so that the Private Secretary to His Honour the Chief Commissioner had written only that morning to Dr. Bullsey saying that he was directed to state that His Honour wished that Dr. Bullsey would either get a typewriter or a clerk, because all he could make of Dr. Bullsey's last demi-official communication, after an hour's study, was *apparently*, "Dear Sir John, in the name of God and Merry Andrew's Aunt let not the whisker hide the pimple when the goats go up the mountain path" . . . and the signature—and further that His Honour was a busy man and would be glad if the remainder of the letter, herewith returned, might be translated and then copied by some one who, among other accomplishments, had learned to write.

It of course speaks ill for Dagga that he should have hated so firm and unswerving a man as Dr. Bullsey, but it is hard properly to admire and love the person whose every remark to you is a cutting sneer or part of a bullying and brow-beating harangue for not understanding the incomprehensible. In his fine and unswerving career towards the right and earnest and honest, Dr. Bullsey disregarded the fact that Dagga had never in his life listened to an Englishman, and never in his life studied current and colloquial English. He was fond of saying, "Isn't that plain English,

my good fool? Don't I speak plainly?" and the proper reply to his question, had Dagga known it, would have been, "Your Honour's plain English is the English I have never encountered, and your Honour's plain speech is the speech I have never heard."

Consequently some such dialogue as the following would take place when Dagga had to enter the office of the dread Principal for some purpose, such as the filling up of a form:

"How old are you?"

"I beg your pardon, Sir."

"How *old* are you?"

In trembling bewilderment, "I beg your pardon, Sir."

With a roar and a grab at nothing, "How *old* are you? *How old are you*? Isn't that plain English? Don't I speak plainly?"

Green with fright, writhing in mental anguish, with dry tongue and starting eye-balls, "I *beg* your pardon, Sir."

With a leap and a bellow of rage, "Are you an absolute, utter, perfect, and completely finished idiot? Were you born mad or have you gone mad since? *Do* you understand plain, simple, monosyllabic terminology or don't you? What wretched native High School do you come from? Why do you cumber my College before you can speak and understand the simplest and most elementary English? In Heaven's name, how *old* are you?"

Dagga bursts into tears. "Sir, I beg humbly your Honour's pardons to my impudences and excuse the troubles. I am knowing nothing."

"God keep me sane," groans the Principal, far too

high-minded a man to strike a weaker, but enjoying the grinding of a humble and unfighting spirit in the dust of abasement and suffering. "God keep me sane, you gibbering idiot. Get up and tell me how old you are!"

And then the baboo, sitting at his unobtrusive table and vastly enjoying the scene, thinks time enough has been wasted if he is to get home to his curried vegetables that night, and quietly asks:

"What is your age?" and Dagga instantly replies, "Fifteen years."

He has been asked "What is your age?" in just that intonation and accent a hundred times—but the words, "How old are you?" he has never heard in his life, whether in familiar accent or strange.

"Then why couldn't you say so at once?" roars Dr. Bullsey, who hates shilly-shally, despises a fool, and cannot compose a decent idiomatic sentence in any vernacular of the East, and very few in any of the West.

So Dagga hates the upright, downright, honest, and straightforward Dr. Bullsey very, very bitterly. . . "And if this is one of their *gurus* and *padres*," thinks he, "what must the ordinary Sahib be like in violence and unreasonable wrath! . . . Is it *my* fault that I cannot understand his strange phrases?"

No, poor wretch, it was not his fault that his only English was written English, grammar books learned by heart, "guides" to the Matriculation learnt by heart, and answers to such questions as "Define Prosody, Epithet, Epigram, Epitaph, Apophthegm, Allegory, Metathesis, Oxymoron, Simile, Onomatopœia, Prosopopœia, Metaphor, Alliteration, Synecdoche, Tautology, Personification, Hyperbole, and Apodeictic-

ality" . . . learnt by heart. It was not his fault that he could answer these useful questions in a way to astonish you, but could not answer the question, "How old are you?"

But in spite of being the butt, the prize fool, and the *bête noire* of the upright and downright unswerving Dr. Bullsey, Dagga's name headed every list, and Dagga carried all before him—in the class-room. In the playing field he was never seen. Living on an insufficiency of bad food, and squatting bent double over a book all day and three parts of the night, is not conducive to physical vigour, and the College knew nothing of physical education beyond games for the strong and skilful, and a gladiatorial team to uphold the honour of the College against the other Colleges. There are no more cruelly hopelessly true words, in any of the world's Scriptures or recorded profane Philosophies, than those of the great statement "Unto him that hath shall be given, and, from him that hath not, shall be taken away even the little that he hath."

Had Dagga been a man of brawn and muscle he would have had every opportunity and inducement to become more brawny and muscular. Had it ever been his exceeding good luck to learn to play cricket, football, hockey, or some other game to shed the dew of its blessing upon him and keep him fit, well, mentally wholesome, and physically strong, he would have had ample opportunity and inducement to play those games and increase both skill and love for them. For the very strong were a gymnasium and gymnastic prizes; for fine cricketers and footballers were cricket and football. For the weed who, above all things, needed muscular development there was nothing.

Daily he seemed to grow more frail, more stooping, more anæmic, shorter-sighted and feebler; and daily he hated the College, his work, and his life more and more. But daily he amassed more facts and developed his marvellous hypertrophied memory, and daily he grew nearer and ever nearer a "brilliant" degree. If his shattered, but strangely tenacious constitution held out, he would be famous at the University for nine days, and get either a handsome post or a Government of India Scholarship to an English University. If he got the latter he would sit for the Indian Civil Service, and get in too, if cramming would do it, and he was credibly informed that cramming *would* do it.

His informant was Hari Kesoo Vidyabhusana Dé, Esquire, B.Sc. (Calbay), Europe Returned, Failed B.A. (Cantab.), and Editor of the foulest, meanest rag that ever adorned the gutter-press of India, in the intervals of cramming private pupils for the Matriculation Examination.

Hari Kesoo Vidyabhusana Dé, Esquire, of Karabad —recently Harry K. V. Day, Esquire, of Altamont House, Montresor Terrace, Tarantella Crescent, Montmorency Road, West Kensington—was a Product and a "demmed moist unpleasant body," one of the hundreds who have been aimlessly crammed, aimlessly goaded to pass stupid examinations in useless subjects, aimlessly rewarded with money for their obedience, aimlessly sent to England to do some more of it, and turned rudderless on a strange uncharted sea, to sink or swim. He had very naturally sunk, as his "education" had done less than nothing to give him character, and had ruined such physique as a thousand years of Turkish-bath atmosphere and temperature had

enabled his ancestors to transmit to him. His father was butler to Mr. William Burgoyne, for a time, at Sudden-Death Lodge, Karabad.

He had purposed to return to India as an I.C.S. ruler of men, after taking another cram degree, but had been practically deported with a very narrow escape from gaol. He had robbed a number of tradesmen, swindled several credulous friends, promised matrimony to quite a number of servant girls and the daughter of his landlady, and had become engaged to a simple girl whose head happened to be full of the pernicious "little brown brother" trash and the "universal equality and brotherhood of man" lie; and who said to her broken-hearted mother, "Even if I did not love him with all my soul for his gentle romantic beauty and charming thoughts and manners, I would jump at the opportunity of doing what I, in my insignificant person, can, to bridge the gulf, and to sacrifice myself upon the altar of the Union of East and West. Besides, he would commit suicide if I refused him. He has sworn it." He had—to many people—including the servant girls and the landlady's daughter.

But her father, albeit a prolific and shiftless curate, was no fool, and sent for the girl's brother, a fourth-year undergraduate at Oxford, hoping to get a pass-degree in his fifth year, but playing three-quarters in the 'Varsity Rugby Football team. . . .

"Find out all about him, Bob, and see if something can't be done to save Veronica from marrying this Idolater, this Heathen, this—ah—Othello," said the Reverend Joseph Stirling, A.M.

And Bob had straightway "started in," and had soon found that Harry K. V. Day, Esquire, B.Sc. (Calbay), was either a much-abused unfortunate

young man, or else a very slippery customer—probably the latter.

To begin with, all his Indian "references" were either imaginary people or as inattentive as Baal, for not one of them replied to the letters he sent them, asking for information *re* one Hari K. V. Dé. . . . Nor could one often visit Mr. Day's residence at Altamont House, Montresor Terrace, Tarantella Crescent, Montmorency Road, West Kensington, without finding melancholy and truculent duns waiting on the steps with little accounts—nearly all for luxuries of a flagrant type. And one day Bob Stirling found something else.

The thing happened thus.

In the ancient University City of Oxford prevails the custom of "barging in" when a friend is in "digs," either with or without a perfunctory knock. There is always a handle on the front door of the house which, being turned, admits you. You never dream of knocking. The landlord or lady would throw a fit if you gave him or her the trouble of emerging from the basement to open a door which you can open for yourself. And if the fit were no concern of yours, the fact remains that you haven't time to wait. So you open the door, run up the stairs, and "barge in."

Now Bob Stirling was fresh from Oxford, and this custom was his daily habit and as natural as breathing, he having been living out of College for a couple of years. And so it came to pass that, going over one day to call on his detested brother-in-law-elect and make enquiry anent a long-overdue reference, he barged in, and incidentally saved his sister's life, and caused the premature death of one William Claney, whom he had never seen and of whom he had never heard.

Miss Veronica Stirling owed her escape from a hell upon earth and from an early death, to Providence or else to a dirty old Israelite merchant in discarded garb and garbage; and William Claney, M.P. for Jewsditch, owed his tragic and lamentable death to one of the two likewise.

For had not Aaron Isaacstein been haggling over a shocking pair of old trousers with Mrs. Bloggs at the door of Altamont House, Bob Stirling would have rung the bell, or knocked, or both, and Harry K. V. Day, Esquire, late of Karabad, would have heard the warning sounds and locked his door. As it was Bob Stirling said "Good-morning" to Mrs. Bloggs, begged her not to trouble to climb the two flights of stairs to announce him, and said he would "just run up."

He ran lightly and swiftly up with the step of a sprinting "blue," and, as he tapped on the closed door of Mr. Day's bed-sitting-room, barged in. . . .

And there he stood as if turned to stone. Then Bob Stirling, rugger three-quarter and heavy-weight boxer, went down the stairs again—but only as far as the hat-stand in the "hall," where he had noticed several walking-sticks and canes, articles in which Harry K. V. Day did himself rather well. And then he ran up again, with one in his hand, looking dangerous.

Meantime, Sarah Higger had slipped out of Dé's room whimpering, "You've swore you'll marry me and take me to yer 'ome in Spine, 'Erry! . . . Yer wouldn't bilk a pore gel as trusted yer? . . . I'll come back when the torf's gorn." Sarah Higger was Mrs. Bloggs' buxom "general," recently from Hoxton, and the over-betrothed of Harry V. Dé, Esquire—a young hidalgo of Spain in temporary eclipse owing

to the machinations of an old but wicked uncle, and only awaiting the latter's demise to return in triumph to his Spanish castle near Otranto by Avignon in Portugal. Sarah was a simple honest girl who, like several others, had loved this Spanish noble unwisely and too well.

Bob Stirling dealt faithfully by Hari K. V. Dé, and gave him of his best while hand could hold stick and stick could hold together. When it broke, he gave Harry an ultimatum:

"If ever I see you again, I'll give you a hiding that will make this one seem like a beautiful dream of fair —er—beanos, and if my sister doesn't get a letter in the morning that makes her hate the sound of your name, I *will* see you after breakfast. I'll warn Bloggs not to let you remove your traps until you have paid your bill, so I shall have you here safe for a while, if I think you need some more."

Bob then departed and had a word with Bloggs, begging him, incidentally, not to lose sight of the servant girl until his father could see her and make some arrangement—but she disappeared when Harry K. V. Day, Esquire, unobtrusively faded away next morning, without his worthless luggage and without writing Veronica the letter of disillusionment and freedom. . . .

But as he lay on the bed that had seemed like to be his death-bed, Dé swore by all his gods, and they were many and various, that he would be revenged. He would poison Stirling with *dhattura* and make him a grinning gibbering lunatic; he would plunge a scissors dagger into him; he would disembowel him with a steel "tiger's claw"; he would have him bound and then cut off his eye-lids, squeeze chillies into his

eyes, and, after removing his ears and nose, would char the feet from his body and then make him walk. He would . . . and he gloated over what he would do if he had Stirling lying bound, hand and foot, before him—well knowing he would never willingly face him in any other circumstances.

Veronica was saved (by Aaron Isaacstein or Providence), but the killing of William Claney was still to do, and was done, thanks to Aaron or Providence.

And Hari Kesoo Vidyabhusana Dé drifted back to India and Karabad, assisted by a kindly Society that exists to get undesirable young Indian gentlemen into England, and out again when it becomes imperatively necessary for them to leave England for England's good.

And, for Bob Stirling's sake, he hated the English as few people have ever hated anyone or anything. And he kept together such body and soul as he had by means of one of the ghastliest things in gutter rags this world has ever seen, and by his labours as a Private Tutor to Young Gentlemen.

And Dagga was fair game for Hari K. V. Dé, a pupil ripe to sit at his feet and imbibe lies till further orders.

He had met Dé at a "meeting" in the city, at which a ranting, lying agitator had screamed enough sedition to hang him a dozen times over, under any other Government in the world. This Government, however, had discharged him, after fifteen years of faithless service, for using his position and power to rob the widow, orphan, and defenceless, in a singularly heartless and rapacious manner, and for taking endless bribes.

On Dagga's turning to Dé, aghast, with "Can these

hings be?" Dé had determined to commence and complete his education without loss of time.

Ere long Dagga wondered how God could let an Englishman live, and he attached some weight to Dé's argument that there cannot be any God or He would not do so. Nor could his own special gods be of much power if they could look on and see their ancient Ind defiled, robbed, insulted, exploited, degraded, and shamed; see her noblest sons slain or deported, just for belonging to perfectly non-political, pleasant social clubs; and her ancient industries deliberately ruined and brought to nought.

He did not care two annas[1] for the Great Mother—specially her parts inhabited by people of other race—but it sounded fine and made him feel a much-wronged man. Some of the songs Dé taught him, and which they sang at the pleasant, perfectly non-political, social club of which Dé was President, made him weep. He would sing them over again and weep afresh. So imperceptible was the progress, and so insidious the poison, that he had no sense of shock or surprise when Dé said to him one night: "The noblest and greatest son of the Mother is he who kills one of her enemies. If there be a nobler and greater it is he who kills two. Perhaps *you* or I will one day become one of the noblest and greatest sons of the Mother." Dagga thought of the upright, downright gentleman whose searing, blistering tongue so tortured him, and who daily "lighted a fire in his belly"—and he ground his teeth.

The conversation and arguments of H. K. V. Dé completed the spiritual unsettlement of Dagga's mind, already sore troubled by the irreconcilable differences

[1] anna = one penny.

between his early beliefs and the teachings of his later textbooks, his own "superstitions" and their scientific explanations, and by the apparent obviousness of the truths it was rank heresy in a good Hindu to believe.

One teaching of Dé appealed to him irresistibly and gave him some comfort and sense of security and peace. It was his doctrine of the wise man's complete freedom and inviolable sanctuary in Death.

Had not every true philosopher a knowledge and feeling of the utmost and greatest safety from all the consequences of all his acts in death—Death which is ineffable peace, unbreakable rest, dreamless sleep, and the highest freedom? Why should any man fear anything when he had but to die and he was beyond all punishment, all trouble and worry, all injury and insult, all everything—happed and wrapped for ever in Nothingness—safe in the glorious harbour of Annihilation after foolishly struggling across the stormy sea of perpetual trouble, strife, and endeavour? Yes, Dé was a great and splendid philosopher and a true friend. He had made him feel another man by this splendid teaching of Freedom, and how every sensible man held the key of the Golden Gate of Everlasting Freedom in his own hand!

What a splendid jest to drive your enemies to the point of visiting some awful punishment upon you, and then slipping through the Golden Gate with a chuckle and settling down to sleep for ever! Ha! He knew of some with whom he would have dealings on the eve of his opening of the Gate.

But let him see the result of the B.A. examination first, and let him have some revenge on his thieving, cheating brother—there would be the time for Sleep

after the doing of a deed he had in mind. Oh! the glorious Annihilation, the blessed Nothingness, the perfect Peace, the Freedom!. . . . The gods reward Dé—if gods there be—for showing him the grand truth, and the unassailable position held. . . . To think that he, the wretched tongue-tied butt and trembler, was master of the keys of Life and Death. . . . How he loved Dé! . . . Away with the love of women! . . . Women took, and took all. . . . Dé gave, and gave such sense of freedom, peace, power, security, and self-salvation as no lying, humbugging *guru* ever gave a bewildered lad. He grudged the time spent out of Dé's company, and knew no happiness like that of sitting with his arm round his neck. What living soul had ever helped or consoled him before? Which of all his accursed books had given him one single illumination or ray of helpful thought? Who of all his damnable crammers had ever spoken one word that had guided his groping, wondering, puzzled, bewildered soul? Dé was Light of his Life, Star of his Soul, Fountain of all Delight, Beloved of his Heart, and much more.

Hari K. V. Dé, Esquire, fully agreed and skilfully shaped his victim and tool—or rather weapon—to his ends. And upon the wretched youth for whom life held no joy, no comfort, no grace, no pleasure, he impressed ever and ever more deeply the tenets that Death is Happiness and that the last and finest act before embracing Happiness is one blow of self-assertion struck at an Englishman's back. "Fall asleep, my philosopher, with the knowledge of one splendid deed, one glorious moment, one grand revenge, one perfect pleasure, and then sleep for ever where, as even *their* earthbound and materialistic poet sings,

'The wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.'"

Dagga went to live with Dé, and the change was decidedly for the worse, from the moral point of view. But in due course Dagga took a "brilliant" degree and was awarded a Government of India Scholarship of a value sufficient to maintain him in modest comfort in England, and he went to Cambridge University, and under the wholesome influence of change, hygienic conditions, relatively bracing climate, and good food, he laid aside the intention of using the Key of the Golden Gate of Freedom.

Hari K. V. Dé saw him go with wrath and bitter curses, for he had regarded the weapon as nearly forged, had plotted the weapon's work, and had looked to watch that weapon's deadly stroke as an innocent bystander—if necessary, to hand over that weapon to the grasp of the law when its blow was struck. Here were all his plans brought to nought and his splendid weapon snatched untimely from his hand. How long might it be before he met another fool so tired of life, so gullible, and so malleable to his purpose! And all was planned so well!

The blow might never be struck at all now, for H. K. V. Dé was not a striker who did his own striking. *He* had no use for the Key of any Golden Gate. The key of a certain house in the bazaar was good enough for him, and anybody who desired Nothingness could have it—so they left him the flesh-pots.

Curses on his infernal luck! Had Dagga not been snatched away, a murderous blow would have been struck whose echo should have rumbled round the world and made smug Britons groan and curse in impotent rage, while he hugged in safety the thought

that his was the mind that directed the blow—his the weapon that struck it—his the skill that forged the weapon.

But misfortunes never come singly, and while Dagga went to Cambridge, Dé went to gaol for robbing and almost killing a woman whose guest and parasite he was.

At Cambridge, Dagga, of course, again carried all before him, by dint of working three hours to the ordinary man's one, and using up in four years the nervous capital of fourteen. Prepared to be browbeaten by his tutor and scorned by his fellows, he found himself treated with a toleration and courtesy he had never before known. Ignored by the sporting set as a hopeless smug, respected by reading men as a steady reader, interfered with by none, and waited on by white servants, he expanded and was almost happy at times. But he never went far from a fireside, and, though organically fairly sound, years of English life still left him a poor creature, nervous, timid, physically slack, and both averse from any muscular effort and capable of little.

And then came the blow that broke his heart and put him back to his old Karabad condition, and worse. He passed brilliantly into the Indian Civil Service and was rejected for his hopeless, complete, and utter inability to ride a horse.

The pride of two Universities failed in equitation!

On the back of a horse he was a quaking, shivering mass of nerves until the horse moved—and then a weeping, prayerful child, mad with terror. Time after time he tried, and time after time he fell, in a

state of sheer collapse, after a dozen yards of quiet trotting.

On the last day that he ever attended that or any other riding-school, the patient and kindly riding-master walked the quiet bored old horse round the school, while he strode beside it with a hand on Dagga's knee. When he stepped aside and clucked his tongue for the steady rhythmic trot, Dagga gave a shriek and flung himself to the ground, to the weary surprise of his steed, and fled from the building.

He took to his bed, and pondered the use of the Key to the Golden Gate of Freedom from this intolerable disappointment and burning shame.

What an end to his dreams of ruling men, of returning to his old home at Palegaon with uniformed peons, of sending for his brother and committing him to gaol, of going to Karabad and saying, " Ha ! Bullsey, how goes it in your hum-drum corner ? " ; of providing poor Dé with a fine printing-press of his own when he came out of gaol, of marrying an English wife and living like the Sahibs, as he had learned to do at Cambridge—he need not say anything about his Hindu wife until they got out to India—of being the Head of the District, Collector and District Magistrate, of dining at Government House, of being salaamed by everybody, of having an assured pension and probably decorations and a title—fancy being Sir Ramswami Dagga, Bart., or even possibly Lord Ramswami of Palegaon. . . . There was no telling what might happen when common pleaders got knighthoods and became political agitators in the hope of getting baronetcies to keep them quiet !

After he recovered from brain fever, he, too, drifted back to India and Karabad, and he, too, kept together

such body and soul as he had, by editing a vile foul rag, and teaching the three R's and English to young children, and by cramming older ones for the Matriculation in the evenings after their teachers had crammed them for six hours of the morning and afternoon. He also turned an honest rupee by doing the home-work of wealthier schoolboys while they sought diversion and pleasant female companionship—in verandahs.

And steadily he sank, but life was easier now.

He had few wants and fewer ambitions. His simple needs were easily satisfied by his modest income from "literary and educational work," and the whilom undergraduate of Cambridge University, intending Civilian, and frequenter of the blameless tea-parties of married dons, spent much of his time sitting on a string-bedstead in the gutter, dressed in an apron, chewing betel-nut, and meditating villainies, most of which he was too apathetic to carry out.

And then returned to him the long-lost friend of his bosom, Hari K. V. Dé—no longer Esquire, but ticket-of-leave man.

Wearying soon of police surveillance, and wanting change and spacious life, Hari made the simple and attractive proposition to his admiring friend, that they should renounce the world, put off mundane responsibilities, duties and cares, and become Holy Men.

Having to go into sudden hiding, he took his pupil to dwell in the empty outhouses of a deserted bungalow known to Europeans as Sudden-Death Lodge. . . . There they sojourned in safety.

Holy Men in India walk about when they do not sit in the dust. They spend their time in meditating

upon God and the next rascality. Their European prototypes are called tramps, but the tramps meditate God less and blaspheme Him less, and, compared with many Holy Men, they are sweet, clean, wholesome, pretty creatures, and very useful members of society.

To become a Holy Man is easy. You plaster your hair with mud and cowdung, smear yourself from head to foot with ashes, but use no sackcloth or other clothing, paint your face according to the particular sect you fancy, hang an assortment of beads, charms, and rubbish round your neck, never dream of working or washing, and there you are!

Of course there are wandering Holy Men who are not mere filthy, loafing criminals, just as there are Scholar Gypsies and Gentlefolk Caravaners among the tramps of the West, but they are not common. There are *Sanyasis* and *Fakirs* who have left all and followed an Idea, and who endeavour to acquire merit, or find the only happiness, or attain the only true holiness, by owning nothing and (particularly) by doing nothing, and who lead lives as blameless as they are useless. These men may be known by their faces—gentle, patient, kindly, weak, fanatical, and ascetic—and by their emaciated bodies.

Likewise may the others, who outnumber them by a hundred to one. A composite photograph of a large number of these, would display as undesirable a face as you are ever likely to see—sensual, brutalized, coarse, animal, and low, with more nose than forehead and more lips than either.

Their bodies bear witness to their holy asceticism by being brawny, muscular, and fat—in marked contrast to those of the workers upon whom they batten.

For, these gentry who neither toil nor spin and are not arrayed like Solomon, ask for what they want and take what is not given. A man of most unusual boldness is the villager who dares to refuse the demand of one of them, and almost unheard of is the woman.

The genuine article holds out his bowl and eats what is put in it, with gratitude and humility, and repays the donor with a valued and, doubtless, valuable blessing; the other states precisely what he will have and recommends haste in the compliance. He knows more of curses than of blessings, and of his curse the ignorant villager goes in great terror, and his wife in far greater. Cannot he regard children with the Evil Eye and give them the dreadful, slow, wasting fever? Cannot he bewitch the cow and dry up her milk? Cannot he keep off the rain whose non-arrival means famine, pestilence, and death? Cannot he weave a spell over the well and bring the Great Sickness? And, on the other hand, if placated, cannot he mutter invocations certain to save the life of the sick husband, wife, or child, if it were not too late before you implored his aid? . . . Cannot he promise, and give, the greatest boon, and remove the most awful of all fates when the unhappy wife, who fears a supplanter because she has failed in Indian woman's one supreme duty, craves that he will intercede for her with the gods, that she may give a son to her lord?

Who but the Fool would offend the Holy Man who has acquired unknown, unimaginable powers, and has awful influence with the gods, by his terrible asceticisms and self-tortures, and who can bless unspeakably and ban unthinkably? . . . Has he not renounced great wealth, pomp, position and power,

to wander in terrible jungles, living, houseless, upon leaves, roots, and fruits, while the very serpents and panthers respect his holy and sacred person? . . . Does not he—almost as high as a god—sit low in the dust, and beg? . . . Does he not sleep on a bed of nail-points, when not hanging head-downwards over a smouldering fire? . . . And is it not obvious that one who sleeps on nails, or hangs upside-down over fires, must be very dear to the gods, have acquired much merit, and be tremendously powerful? . . . Then give him your right hand or eye if he ask for it, or cast yourself into the well, damned here and hereafter, unfit to live.

Education is undoubtedly queering the Holy Man's pitch, to his very natural wrath against its promoters, but he can still go from Ceylon to Simla, and Karachi to Calcutta, well fed by the credulous; and the profession is still fairly attractive for him who may be constitutionally averse from work, and attracted by the Open Road, the odour of sanctity, the respectful awe of the ignorant, and the joys of licence, swindling, and robbery without violence. The robbery is generally without violence because the violence is rarely necessary, and because the shameless British Government hangs a Holy Man if he murders a squealing child to keep it quiet when he is removing its nose-ring and ear-rings; or if his pilgrim staff smite a recalcitrant villager or his wife too hard, and he is caught red-handed by the police—for naturally no one is going to give evidence against a Holy Man.

And to the many thousands of lazy criminal wastrels and industrious criminal workers, who take the name of *Sanyasi* or *Fakir*, were added, when the coast was clear and escape safe, Messrs. H. K. V. Dé,

B.Sc., and R. G. Dagga, B.A., worthy recruits of a remarkable army, such as could exist nowhere else in the world.

In course of time, the worthies, after strange wanderings and strange crimes, drew nigh to the city of Husseinabad, near Karabad, and, finding air and water agreeable, a temple desirous of lodging them for as long as they would remain and work crowd-drawing miracles—not difficult when you possess a kind of science degree and are near a chemist's shop, and a craving for rest from pious wanderings,—the Holy Men decided to shed the light of their countenances upon the outskirts of Husseinabad for a season, and there sojourn.

And here, in the intervals of great political usefulness to the Central Committee, such as propaganda work, collection of funds, secretion of automatic pistols, dissemination of literature, tampering with sepoys, reception of "political missionary" brethren, spying and reporting, and so forth, the ingenious pair founded a new religion which had a considerable vogue, attracted many believers, and flourished long after its founders had ceased to have any use for it.

Dagga was an incarnation of its god, and Dé was its highest high priest.

If the religion could be given a name at all, one might term it a kind of debased Hedonism, inasmuch as its main tenet was that Pleasure is the Highest Good—the pleasure of the Individual. But it had other important planks in its platform, such as its Founder's power of selling absolution from sin, its doctrine of the equality of all things—to be held by the initiated and elect—and its Founder's Gifts of Periods.

To the large numbers attracted by the tales of the

extreme holiness of the twain and of their asceticisms, self-tortures, and miracles, Dé preached the comfortable doctrine of Pleasure, of Pardon, and of Periods.

The Pleasure was your right and your duty. The god gave opportunities for pleasure, and to miss them was to scorn the gift and insult the giver. Therefore take and eat. Therefore satisfy and gratify every sense. If the gratification could not be had without a punishment or penalty greater than the pleasure, why then forgo it, for the balance is then pain and not pleasure. . . . Aim at having a pleasure-balance at the bank of life, and avoid doing that which will diminish it. . . . Thus, if the thing you covet is in the hands of a stronger, let it stay there; if in the hands of a weaker, take it at once. . . . To all have been given possibilities of enjoyment—let them seize them. If you love the oblivion-bringing liquor—drink; if money is your joy—make it or take it as circumstances indicate. Desire exists only to be gratified. . . . The great pleasure of the Founder and his High Priest was asceticism, and so they were the most ascetic of ascetics—in public. To all his followers the god gave enhanced power of enjoyment.

Also he granted pardon for all past sins—for a consideration—and naturally matricide was more costly than misrepresentation, and blasphemy dearer than business-brightness when you came to the cleansing.

The "Periods" was a great idea and Dé's very own. It was nothing less than the granting of an indulgence to do absolutely and precisely what you liked for a fixed period, with complete immunity from punishment hereafter. . . . For any sin com-

mitted before the commencement of the Period or after its termination, you took your chance in the world to come and the next reincarnation—unless you bought a specific pardon in the usual way. But, during the Period, you could take your grandmother's scalp, your neighbour's wife, your father's life-savings, or your brother's blood, without the slightest fear of acquiring demerit or spiritual punishment. . . . With regard to mundane law, you must look out for yourself, of course.

And the terms?

No period could commence unless and until some serious injury had been done to an Englishman, or offence committed against the British Government. That being satisfactorily performed and proved, a cash payment followed. The amount you paid, and the length of your Period, depended upon the seriousness of your offence against the accursed Feringhee.

One faithful *chela* got a whole year, and only a nominal charge, for contriving the poisoning of a family, of which one member died. . . . He made the most of his year. . . .

The disciples clearly and easily understood that the god was seriously angry with the English for their vile impieties—such as interfering with the right and ancient customs of *suttee*, infanticide, and the dedication of girls to the temple; for eating the sacred flesh of cows, and for teaching wicked superstitions to orthodox children. Naturally the money payment was right, for no one, not even a god, does something for nothing, and of course money was needed for the spread of his teachings.

And who could doubt the marvels and miracles worked before the starting, staring eyes of the believers?

Had not all seen the god reply to the questions of his followers, put through his High Priest, by bringing fire from water as assent, and by turning water to wine as prohibition? Had he not even turned water to blood, to the utter abasement of one bold doubter?

Much can be done with a few trifles like a scrap of sodium, an acid or two, some litmus, and a little permanganate, and much that is entirely different from the old half-believed routine trickery, by a B.Sc. with a turn for juggling.

And the god and his High Priest became a power in the land, whilst the District Superintendent of Police wondered what on earth had come to his quiet law-abiding district.

The Chaplain had been disastrously fetched off his horse by means of a rope skilfully tied across his own gateposts, as he cantered home from the Y.M.C.A. one night.

Horatio Hamilton Harris, the Principal of the Government High School, had been shipwrecked and nearly drowned as he sculled from under the Ripon Bridge, by a great boulder that fell between his knees as his boat came from under the central span.

A great slash had been found one morning in each tyre of the D.S.P.'s[1] own motor.

Several people had been burgled. An obvious attempt had been made to set fire to the Treasury. Obstacles had been placed on the railway-line, and there had been an unwonted rifle-stealing activity. Strangely enough, the motive seemed to be wanton damage and injury, as often as profit of any kind. . . .

There were novelties about the outbreak to puzzle

[1] District Superintendent of Police.

the most experienced D.S.P. . . . He had never before come across cases of the maiming of Englishmen's cattle, for example, and here Mrs. Montgomery's milch-goats had been killed, Mrs. Dainton's two cows had been stabbed, and three different horses, belonging to Sahibs, had been hamstrung.

Who could benefit by robbing kiddies of their milk supply, or by maiming horses?

Was there a Pathan lunatic on the warpath or what? It couldn't be Hindu work.

The new religion was flourishing indeed, and its god was again absolutely the tool, or weapon, of High Priest Hari K. V. Dé, who spent much time pondering a really satisfying stroke therewith, ere he resumed his wanderings—when he had finished with the 20th Punjabi Regiment. And then he met an old friend—Stirling by name—and pondered no longer.

CHAPTER IV

THE FRIEND OF INDIA AND GOD

"YES," remarked the stout gentleman, picturesquely arrayed in brown bowler hat, black morning coat, grey flannel shirt, white flannel trousers, black button boots, wispy black tie, wispy red beard, assorted pimples, and an odour of sanctity, as he cleared his throat industriously and expectorated into the Suez Canal, "yes, I am devoting this holiday to Injer."

"To injure whom, Mr. Claney?" inquired the Subaltern politely.

"To Injer—the country of Injer, I mean of course," was the reply, in a voice almost testy for one so obviously good and respectable.

"And why do you want to injure the country of India?" continued the Subaltern.

The voice of the obviously good and stoutly respectable gentleman took on a pitying quality of note as he gave answer: "It is written, 'None are so deaf as those who won't hear.' . . . What I was trying to observe was, that I am devoting this holiday to the service of poor bleeding Injer."

"O, *please*, don't use such dreadful language," interposed the Subaltern hurriedly, and with a shudder, "or I cannot stay here—I really cannot."

"Languidge!" ejaculated the other. "*Languidge!* What *do* you mean, young feller? What languidge, pray? I'd have you to know I never yet used languidge in the whole of me life. Languidge, indeed! Me!!!"

"Really, I'm most awf'ly sorry, you know," was the conciliatory answer. "I thought you said a wicked word. In fact, you reminded me of my grandpa, General Bucker. He used to talk just like that, you know. They called him 'poor adjective Bucker,' you know, as you did India. . . . Most natural mistake on my part. . . . Come and have a drink?"

"Thank you, no. *I* do not pour poison into my insides."

"What a pity," said the Subaltern, but his countenance was innocent, childlike, and bland. He was the great friend of the Burgoynes and their children, and was known as "Buster," to them and to many.

"How many insides have you?" asked a beautiful little girl, the daughter of William Burgoyne, who had joined the group in time to hear the good gentleman's last statement.

"Little gels should be seen and not heard," was the

crushing sequel to this perfectly single-minded attempt to gather "useful information."

"What I was remarking," he resumed, "was that I am going to devote this holiday to the sacred cause of my poor unhappy feller-subjects in Injer. They have cried unto me and I have heard their cry.

> "Children crying in the night,
> Children crying for the light,
> And with no languidge but a cry."

"What is a 'ker-ryee,' please?" asked the little girl, still in search of Knowledge.

"Injer wants ejucating: Injer wants moralizing: Injer wants uplifting—Injer is what I might call the Brightest Jool in the British Crown; and what do we find, my friends? . . . We find that it is shamefully neglected. . . . We find that it is left to be the private property of a parcel of bureaucrats."

"Hear, hear!" agreed the Subaltern. "Down with 'em."

"Yes, my friends," resumed the good gentleman, thus encouraged, "this Brightest Jool is left to wither in the shadow of neglect, and to shipwreck on the Slough of Despond. . . . There is not a public school in the country; there is not a single Indian judge; religion is absolutely prohibited in such schools as there are; yea, even the blessed rights of freedom of speech and the freedom of the press are unknown."

"Is that so, indeed!" said the Chief Commissioner of Kubristan. "You surprise and shock me. Who is your informant?"

"Ah, I am one of those who get their information first-hand. A friend of mine, another M.P., went there last year. . . . Besides, I have made it my business to get friendly with some young Indian

gents who live in England. Very pleasant-mannered they are and agreeable, and they told me all about it. Now I am going to see it all meself, and then I am going to write a book, besides what I am going to write to the paper that has asked me for a series of articles. Oh, *I'll* show the bureaucrats up!"

"I fancy I could name that paper," observed Sir William Hastings, Director of Education in the Bendras Presidency.

"And how long did your friend, the other M.P., spend in India?" asked the Chief Commissioner.

"Three weeks."

"Must be a clever chap."

"Ah, he is so."

"And how long will it take *you* to become an Authority on India?"

"I shall be there a month. . . . You can see a lot in a month."

"Yes," agreed the Commissioner, "and hear a lot in a month."

"Do you know much about Injer?"

"No, not much."

"Ever been there?"

"I have lived in India for over quarter of a century."

"Pretty unobservant then, aren't you?"

"Perhaps that is it," said the Commissioner, who was a distinguished Orientalist, a recognized authority on Indian ethnology, a most able, popular, just, and sympathetic official, a devout lover of India, and, incidentally, Providence to a few million people.

"But perhaps you're a bureaucrat?"

"I am a member of the Indian Civil Service, I admit without a blush."

"Perhaps you're even a Prancing Proconsul?"

"No, members of my service don't usually become proconsuls, and I don't prance. Getting old."

"Perhaps you're one of those that think nobody should have a say about Injer except themself? . . . Perhaps you would like nobody to ever visit the place? . . . Perhaps you think that nobody that does not belong to your service is capable of forming a sound opinion?"

"Not at all. I think that the more *intelligent* visitors the country has, the better, if they come with open and unbiassed minds, and stay long enough to see a little of the real India. . . . But you can't learn all there is to be learnt in three weeks or even in a month—especially when you spend two-thirds of your time on hotel verandahs being interviewed by axe-grinders and persons following the honourable and remunerative profession of 'Agitator.'"

"And pray, how do *you* know how I shall spend my time, might I ask?"

"You are not the first of your kind who has come to India, unfortunately, by a good many. . . . I haven't the least doubt that your motives, though mixed, are on the whole good; but you will do a terrible deal of harm. . . . You have got letters from those young Indian gentlemen of pleasing address; other letters, rather different in tone, have preceded you; you will be met at Bombay and garlanded with flowers; you will be hailed the Saviour of India; a committee will be appointed to run you, and to pass you on to a similar one at Karabad and elsewhere; you will swell with pride and make speeches, about which you will afterwards feel a little nervous; every one of your prejudices and preconceived ideas will be trebly

confirmed and your already biassed mind will be still further biassed; you will be told a large number of untruths and a larger number of distorted truths; effects will be pointed out to you and their causes will be hidden from you; what your most polite and agreeable captors desire you to see, you will see—through their spectacles; and you will quit India knowing less than nothing of it, and having done it great harm by serving the ends of mischievous, designing, and dangerous persons, and by lending them the name and countenance of an English M.P., which, even nowadays, have a certain weight—in India at any rate. . . . Pardon me if I have offended or hurt you, but you—er—asked for it, you know."

"Oh, don't mind *me*, pray," said the other, with heavy sarcasm. "I'm nobody. Anything else I'll do, while you're about it? . . . 'Blessed are those that are persecuted for righteousness' sake.' . . . Any more?"

"Well, if you seek further information, I can confidently inform you that you will hear, and swallow with avidity, horrible tales of police torture winked at by the judiciary; wondrous legends of extravagance, if not of bribery and corruption, in high places; theories of 'drains' and 'bleeding India'—but that you have already got, apparently; marvellous stories of official rudeness amounting to wanton insult and brutality; and a general account of neglected Education, Art, Music, Architecture, Sanitation, Literature, Agriculture, Law, Religion, Morality, and everything else that can be neglected, except Taxation and Oppression. In fact, if you show yourself particularly credulous and greedy for calumnies, they may even give you the 'poisoned well' yarn, and the 'encourage-

ment of Plague and Cholera' theories. . . . I sometimes wonder they are not afraid of overdoing it a little, but they are very good judges of that sort of thing. . . . Take my advice and give it up. It's playing with fire, and whether you individually can do much towards a conflagration or not, you will certainly find in the long run that you have scorched yourself. . . . *No* constituency can possibly contain a majority of people that are not sickened at the bare idea of the sort of thing that you are probably going to do. . . . Or look here, come and be my guest for one clear year. I undertake not to make the slightest attempt to 'convert' you in any way. You shall have the run of the Province, and do exactly as you please, so long as you don't break our few and simple laws. And I'll undertake to write an introduction to your book. All that I stipulate is that you stay for a year."

"And how am I going to find a year to go messing about Injer, pray? . . . You forget I am a Member of Parliament. *I'm* not a leisured bureaucrat. . . . I've no time for that sort of thing."

"Then if you've no time for the proper study of Indian affairs, don't attempt it until you have. . . . See the country by all means, but see it independently, and don't for Heaven's sake go home an Authority and write a book of other people's—er—'statistics,' let us call them. . . . The ablest man who ever lived could not make himself worth hearing on India's problems in much less than a year. No able man would try. . . . Moreover, the longer he stayed the more diffident he would become, and the more cautiously he would write."

"All very disinterested, no doubt. 'Let the galled jade wince!' What? . . . I reckon I'll come your

way with my little eye, *and* notebook. What? No, I wasn't born yesterday, Mister."

"I have already invited you to come for a year."

"Yes, knowing full well I couldn't accept."

"The invitation holds good for whenever you *can* accept it!"

"Well, I can't accept it, and in any case I shouldn't put myself blindfold in the hands of a bureaucrat."

"Hear, hear!" said the Subaltern, "they're an artful, wicked lot."

"Well, don't put yourself blindfolded in the hands of seditious agitators either. . . . I didn't invite you with the intention of blindfolding you, or because I like you or think your views might be of the slightest value."

"Why then, might I ask?"

"Because, for some reason, the British Public attaches weight to the opinions of persons of your type. . . . I suppose it feels that since it pays them to talk it may as well listen to them."

Then, stretching forth the red right hand of demagogic declamation with such violence that a "detachable" linen cuff was shot high into the air and overboard in irremediable divorce from the grey flannel shirt, the good gentleman bawled:

"My friends, by all the sacred traditions of the glorious British Constitution, I conjure——"

"Ficcie, come quick, the Funny Man is going to conjure," screamed the little girl delightedly, and, the lunch bugle sounding above the peals of laughter, the audience of the Friend of India melted away like a summer mist, leaving that gentleman transfixing the little girl with a venomous scowl, the which both

children accepted as the histrionic prelude to the promised feats of conjuring.

"I didn't know the Funny Man was a conjurer, Boodle," said Ficcie, a tremendously sturdy little chap with great gentle eyes contradicted by a strong mouth. "Is he a *pukka* one?"

"Oh, *yes*, he just made the cuff fly off his shirt without using a knife or scissors or nothing. Then he said he conjures. I believe he is awful clever really, although he *is* so rummily turned out."

"Don't ever turn your back to him; not never."

"Why not?"

"Because he might bite it"

"Why would he?"

"I don't know, but Captain Wriggling Fortyscrews said he thinks he neither smokes, drinks, nor swears, but takes it out in back-biting."

Captain Rigden-Fortescue had indeed been guilty of this uncharitable remark anent the Legislator.

"Please WON'T you conjure again? You said you would?" begged Boodle, drawing a little nearer. "Could you make the other cuff fly away? Ficcie didn't see your first trick. He does love good conjuring, and he was awf'ly done by a conjurer this morning, too. It put him off his oats, I 'sure you. . . . Do, *please*. . . We know you're awful clever. You could lunch with us if it makes you late, my *ayah* will look after you."

"An 'iding is what *you* want, the pair of you," answered the scowling statesman.

"What is a 'niding,' please?" inquired Ficcie.

"Ho, you don't know, don't you? Well, I'd like to enlighten you," replied the man, as he turned away to go below in search of what he always termed a "sloosh,"

the Bishop always called " pre-prandial ablutions," and common people a " wash."

" All conjurers is untruthers," said Ficcie, with a heavy sigh. " I believe he isn't a bit honester than that one that stole my darling little puppy-chicken this morning, when it had only just come to me, too." and for the twentieth time he recounted the first real tragedy of his short life.

" You see, Boodle, it *was* my chicken, because he found it *here* in my very own pocket. He came on board when the deck stopped at Porksay,[1] and he sat down and did tricks with walnuts and marbles and fings, and I sat right close up, to see well, and all of a sudden he said, ' Ooo, one leetle boy, you got one leetle chicken in your parkit '—like Ayah talks, you know, and I said, ' That I've not, what a story ! ! ' —quite perlite—and then he put his hand to my pocket and took out such a darling little teeny baby chicken-cub, all yellow it was, and put it down on the deck. Then I said I had not known it was there, and ' I beg your pardon,' and he said, ' Oah, yess, it is in your parkit all the times,' and so I said, ' Fank you for finding it,' and I picked it up and I bunked downstairs into the cabin, and offered it my packet of Turkidge Daylight that Ayah would not let me eat for *chota hazri*, and while I was helping it to eat, the deck-stewer came and took it back, and he said it was the conjurer's chicken, alvo' it comed out of my very own pocket," and the little lip quivered as its owner gulped lest he shame his manhood with a tear.

" He was a snifty pig," said Boodle " and will never, never go to Heaven. That's one comfort. I'd rather lose the chicken and go to Heaven, wouldn't you ? "

[1] Port Said ?

"It wasn't your chicken," was the reply.

"It will be awf'ly badly bwought up, I expec'," resumed the bereaved, mournfully, "and it had such a poor appletite; it simply wouldn't *touch* the Turkidge Daylight. I think the darling wants medcing. And I shall never see it again."

"Never mind, Fic, it had a lovely time with you and will think of you always. Besides, we shall come back this way soon, and we'll get Mummy to ask the conjurer if there is a chicken in *her* pocket, and if he finds it there it will be hers, and we will keep it till death it do part, and then we'll give it the loveliest funeral and you shall be clergyman in my nighty. You can be the Bishop if you like, in Mummy's lace nighty, if you are good," she added generously.

"Perhaps the Bishop would lend us his own real *surplus* nighty if anything died," said the small boy, hopefully. "Widdy might die at any time, you know."

Widdy was the ship's cat, who led a strenuous life owing to her recent promotion to the post of Leading Lady, as it were, in most of the ingenious games invented by this cheerful pair, blessed, or cursed, with powerful imaginations. . . . Having been christened "Widdy," by reason of her prevailing blackness relieved with white at the throat, poll, and "wrists," with due solemnity, garb, water—in the quoits' bucket—cake, and sporadic chorality, the Widow in her time played many parts, and had been fairly broken to single harness, with an adapted photographic camera in the rôle of cart. . . . It made a poor cart and, afterwards, a still poorer camera. . . . Although surlily unresponsive to adults and resentful of familiarities, the Widow was incredibly tolerant of the fre-

quently painful greatness thrust upon her by the children, thereby giving food for thought to the psychologist. . . . When freed from some particularly undignified and unnatural situation "by order" of some officious and crassly unimaginative Grown-up, she would invariably remain as close as possible to her alleged tormentors, with an air of "What shall we do now?"

Widdy would provide a beautiful funeral, no doubt about it. But you cannot eat your cake and have it: you cannot give your cat a high-class nautical funeral and play with it. Even if you do not consign it to the Deep, the possibilities of a defunct pussy—as a plaything—are limited, in the Tropics especially. . . . No, there is more in a live cat than in a dead one, metaphorically at any rate. . . . Besides, Widdy was a darling, and was *splendid* as a wounded tiger, a sick child—she simply hated eau-de-cologne though, especially in the eyes—a fast trapper, a rajah's elephant, the Princes in the Tower, Casabianca, William Tell's brave son—though Ficcie was really a scandalously careless William—a school, a tea-party guest, a caller, a kennelled watch-dog, and a fox or pack of hounds.

Boodle revolved these things in her heart.

No, the Widow must not die. Still it *would* be a lovely funeral, and there might be a preliminary trial and execution. . . . Lady Jane Grey, or Mary Queen of Scots, perhaps? No! Perish the thought! Good, faithful, darling Widdy—and so useful in her feline sphere—or rather out of it.

Woman-like, she temporized with "Bishops *never* lend their surplice nighties." The finality of the remark, as from one who had made a specialized study of a rare animal and can speak with authority on its

traits, was somewhat marred by the addition of the promise, "But I will ask him when he comes up from lunch."

"Yes, what shall we do till he comes up? I wish Ada Brown and William Green were here. We could interduce them to Widdy and play Cinderella's coach, and lots of weddings and chrissnings and foonrals."

Ada Brown and William Green were guinea-pigs of merit, who also in their time played many parts and suffered many things. They were probably the only guinea-pigs in the world who had had the benefit of sea-bathing, had attended church, incognito, had slept in a "human" bed, and had chummed with a grey squirrel, a green parrot, a mongoose, and a lizard.

"Perhaps they'll be waiting for us at Karabad."

"Yes, and I know a good game. Let's pretend the S'loon is Hell and the Funny Man is all burning for telling that wicked story about conjuring."

"But Mummy and Daddy are there too, Boodle."

"Then they must come out of it and the Bishop too, if he doesn't want to be in Hell with the Funny Man."

And thus it came about that a clear sweet voice floated down, apparently from Heaven, and astonished Mr. and Mrs. William Burgoyne and the assembled lunchers with "Hurry up, Mummy and Daddy! The S'loon is Hell, and the Funny Man is in it, and we want the Bishop's week-day nighty."

. . . . . .

And in the fullness of time the good ship *Arabia* reached Bombay harbour, and her passengers were scattered to the ends of Ind—one of which is Karabad.

CHAPTER V

STILL MORE COINCIDENCES AT SUDDEN-DEATH LODGE

"D'YOU object to Spooks, old chap?" inquired William Burgoyne of his wife, as they sat at breakfast in the Moti Mahal hotel of Karabad.

"Never met one, my son," replied Mrs. Burgoyne.

"Any special objection to meeting one?" continued Bill.

"Not the spook of a nice young man with a curly moustache. I should hate to have the ghost of a catty old female about the place, of course," admitted Mummy. "Why do you ask?"

"Well, the only decent and suitable bungalow that I can discover to be available, is known as Sudden-Death Lodge and has a well-established reputation for spookiness."

"Let's go at once, if the house itself is all right, and not damp or built on a plague-pit or anything," was the reply. "I'd rather have assorted ghosts in every room than spend a day longer than necessary in an Indian hotel. . . . I could never bring myself really to like the taste of cockroach. . . . No . . . nor to look with kindly eye upon the playful rat disporting in the bedroom when he has awakened me by knocking something off the dressing-table."

"Right O!" said Bill, "We'll move in on Friday the thirteenth—a nice lucky sort of day. . . . I got an opinion from Barle, the Executive Engineer, to the effect that the house itself is absolutely all right in every way, and I also obtained a remarkably low rent proposition from the worthy Potwallah who owns it.

. . . Suspiciously low, in fact, when I accused him of concealing the fact that the house was notoriously haunted, of evil repute, and untenanted for ages."

"How did you know?"

"Well, I spotted the house and then went on to see Barle about it at once. . . . He was just having his *chota hazri* and we had a 'buck' about it. . . . He knows it well, having been stationed here for years and years."

"And what's wrong with it?"

"It is 'unlucky,' to use his own expression, and it is subject to Coincidences."

"As how?"

"People die there."

"People must die somewhere."

"Exactly what I said. . . . So long as the house doesn't kill 'em, why shouldn't they die there if they want to? Still, Barle wasn't taking any, and said he wouldn't live there rent-free, nor yet if they paid him the rent to do it—no, nor under any other conditions either. . . . And he's a hard-headed engineer too."

"But *why*?"

"Simply because the house is 'unlucky,' and people undoubtedly and undeniably die there with remarkable frequency."

"And yet Mr. Barle guarantees the house itself to be perfectly all right and wholesome and safe, so far as the non-supernatural is concerned?"

"Absolutely. . . . Dry as a bone, admirably light and airy, excellent soil, no mosquitoes whatever, perfect water supply, faces in right direction, servants' quarters and stables well away from the house, in fact 'desirable family residence' all over. . . . Except —well, you know—'unlucky'—spooky. Seems as

though every rotter in the Husseinabad division who wanted to die came there to do it, and a few who didn't want to."

"Well," said Mummy, "if they went there to die, let's go there to live."

"Take our innocent kids to herd with low spooks?"

"I believe all spooks are highly refined and most intensely respectable," replied the little lady, who was as brave as two lions—in the face of any danger or terror except a mouse, "and, when I believe that a spook can hurt a child, I'll drop religion."

"Might scare it," suggested Bill, who kept an open mind on most subjects.

"A lying fool of a servant might scare it," replied his wife, "but why should a child, who has never heard of a ghost, fear one? . . . A person who didn't know what a corpse was, couldn't fear a corpse; nor one who had never heard of a wasp, fear a wasp. . . . Besides, there are no such things as ghosts—more's the pity. . . . I could like a nice ghost—so quiet and restful, and a good listener probably. . . . In we go."

And in they went.

But there were hitches.

The butler who had been with the Burgoynes for several years, laid his turban at his master's feet, beat his head upon the ground, and implored his master not to go into the bungalow—because it would cause the separation of a kind master from a faithful servant. For Imam Buksh would not go there, not if the Presence paid him a hundred rupees a month instead of twenty.

"The air is evil, Huzoor," said Imam Buksh.

"The air is doubtless much the same inside as out," replied Burgoyne. "Go, coward."

"Huzoor! I am no coward. I seized with my hand

the snake that fell from the verandah *chick* [1] upon my former master's child, as the Presence knoweth. But I am not weary of life. . . . The air of that house is evil."

"Then leave my service, brave man," said Bill, and the brave man left it. So did Ishwar Surti the "second boy." So did Sebastian Antonio de Norhona the Goanese cook. So did Wagga the *hamal*. So did Ganpat Gossain the dressing-boy. So did the three syces. All were old servants; all shed tears; all were firm.

Ayah was faithful, went with her beloved charges, and died in three months of galloping consumption.

But then thousands and thousands of other natives died that year, and every other year, of consumption.

The new cook fell sick of abscess on the liver, and died in harness—in other words, in the cook-house. But he must have been ill when he was engaged.

The wife of the new head-syce had a very powerful voice and used it unceasingly and nasally. When she was not scolding or quarrelling, she was singing. . . . Singing also, one evening, was sweet and pretty Mrs. Eller in the drawing-room, after dinner. The two voices, and songs, did not harmonize.

"Go and tell that infernal woman to be quiet at once," whispered Bill to the new butler. He alluded to the wife of the head-syce.

The infernal woman was quiet for ever more, for she immediately hanged herself with Bill's thinnest bridle-reins from a rafter of the stable. . . . Her husband rapidly fattened.

But then suicide is an anything but uncommon form

[1] Blind

of retaliation for undeserved or excessive rebuke, in merry India, as poor Mummy was shortly to learn. Thus:

Mummy was particular about the milk drunk by her idols, and invariably kept her own goats, cow, or buffalo and saw them fed and milked. The milk she then saw boiled, poured into a "scalded" vessel and covered over.

She had no intention of enteric visiting Bill or cholera her babes—through the milk-supply anyhow.

Not unnatural, then, was her wrath at coming quietly, though accidentally, upon the new butler in the act of pouring stale filthy water, *from the dog's drinking-bowl*, into the sterilised milk to replace the pint-or-so that he had just stolen.

Slow to wrath, Mummy in real anger was to be feared, and in this case, the villainy and treachery of using the foul water when there was boiled water, filtered water, and fresh tap-water within a yard of the wretch, made her as a tigress whose cubs are threatened.

Kesoo Vidyabhusana Dé heard a plain opinion of himself and his conduct, and received notice of dismissal, to take effect as soon as a substitute could be found.

Kesoo Vidyabhusana trembled with rage and fear—rage at being accurately described by a mere woman, fear at what might be the effect of the news of his shameful trick upon the justly indignant Master, when he came home.

Kesoo Vidyabhusana brooded until the bungalow was silent, the children asleep, the servants at their meal, the Mem-Sahib lying down during the hottest hour—and then crept to the Sahib's office, where, on the wall, hung Sam Browne belts, swords, steel scab-

bards, hog spears, spurs, and, in a leather holster, a heavy service revolver.

Kesoo Vidyabhusana removed the latter from the holster, opened a drawer of the desk, opened a box in the drawer, and took six cartridges therefrom. They were of the concave-nosed, man-stopping variety.

Kesoo Vidyabhusana crept to his one-roomed house at the bottom of the compound, placed the revolver in a smoke-blackened niche of the wall, and, having prayed to it for some time, did unto it *poojah* [1] of a complicated kind with water, red powder, marigolds, and rice.

Kesoo Vidyabhusana knew how to load a revolver. He knew how to clean and oil it, how to remove the cylinder, how to fire it, how to eject empty cases—everything, in fact, but how to aim. No. He did not know how to aim, but he knew that quite satisfactory results would follow if you put the muzzle into your mouth and pulled the trigger—or, under other circumstances, crept up to a sleeping enemy—or mistress, say, and put the muzzle to his—or her, say—ear, eye, temple, throat, breast or elsewhere. Quite satisfactory.

Should Kesoo Vidyabhusana, therefore, put the muzzle into his own mouth, or into the ear of—some other person?

If the latter, his own death was inevitable, just as inevitable as if he chose the former.

Death by hanging is a trifle, of course, and just as effectual and final as death by explosion-in-the-mouth. Death by hanging has no terrors whatsoever, but an angry Sahib *has*. An angry Sahib is positively a thing of terror, a warning to devils.

To put a revolver in your mouth and pull the trigger

[1] Worship.

is as easy as putting a handful of greasy rice in your mouth and bolting it.

To stand on a drop with a rope round your neck is as easy as standing on the grating under the pump with water flowing on your back.

To see an angry Sahib, with cold hard face, flashing grey eyes, those awful grey eyes, straight thin lips, those awful thin lips, and clenched hands, walking towards you—saying nothing . . .

Kesoo Vidyabhusana shuddered—no, it wasn't to be thought of. Better burn alive. No. Let not the very maddest, wildest, most desperate vengeance include the Woman or the Child when dealing with the Master Folk. Better cut off the nose of the Man than merely kick the Woman or the Child when dealing with the Master Folk! Kali Goddess! what tales one's grandfathers told of the days of the Great Killing—more than fifty years ago! No. Touch not Woman nor child, lest something come between you and your suicide, and the Master Folk get you ere you can die.

Gods! What fools are the great and wise Master Folk, for they are positively maudlin on any point but this; and any dog may gull and cozen them! Look how they raise up butlers' bastards to be learned clerks—and then hasten to fling to them with both hands whatsoever they may demand in the farthing prints they have been taught to scrawl in English, and which only they and the Masters read. . . . Aye! raise them up and honour them above *zemindars*, *sirdars*, merchants, *seths* and chieftains who scorn and loathe them, and who sit silent while the school-stuffed curs yap at the foolish-wise, strong-weak, clever-silly Masters! . . .

Look at the ungrateful, unnatural hound Hari Kesoo

Vidyabhusana Dé, son of good Kesoo Vidyabhusana, now about to die, educated free by the Masters and sent to England; a bitter hater of the Masters because they have not made him a king, or a god, or a judge, and despising the good old father, who—well—who starved and beat him till he got into trouble about it. Curses on Hari Kesoo who would never see his father's corpse properly burnt; a snarling cur who had gone to jail and then starved on about thirty rupees a month by driving a pen and teaching children for eight hours a day, before turning *sanyasi*, when he might have been a fat and happy butler, rich, honoured, and with a paunch, but for the foolish Masters. Even in the days when Hari sat naked on the floor, and as he ate his rice from the dish said to him, "Undarnted I prossid and shall be educated gent B.A., old plate-licking man" in English, he had known evil would come of it, tho' he took good rupees—*Iskarlaship* rupees, from the ungrateful unnatural boy.

A little English was a fine thing, but this Education was the devil.

Well, he'd send him a message before he did it, and give him a chance to see if his English learning would quite avail to relieve and soothe him when he received a dead father's curse. . . . Could not the wretch have supported his good father, or at least have found a lodging near by, and fed the author of his being, even if he could not come and live in the compound with his father and pay him a fair sum for board and lodging?

Let him see how he liked a father's curse. . . . An idea! . . . Should he kill himself at his son's temple, instead of at his master's door? . . . Kill himself before the eyes of the unnatural Hari and his "high-

priest," Ramchandra Ganganath Dagga? . . . No. . . . The curse would be enough for the son—and the Mem-sahib would feel immeasurably more shock at seeing him die than ever his impious unrespecting, "educated" son would. . . . When and where should he do it? . . .

Kesoo Vidyabhusana had never enjoyed the advantage of reading the works of Mr. Ibsen and had never heard the words,

"Do it beautifully, with vine-leaves in your hair," but his tortuous bekinkéd mind was obsessed with the desire to do it dramatically, impressively, injuriously, with the maximum of revengeful horror.

And suddenly he remembered that he had not prepared the bread-and-butter, the sardine-sandwiches, the toast, the scones, the caviare-biscuits, that Master liked with a whisky and soda, for tea—he must hurry.

And a minute later, Kesoo Vidyabhusana, quiet, deft, spotless, in snowy garments and white turban, was busying himself about preparations for afternoon tea, whereunto three or four guests were expected. . . . But a flower-wreathed revolver lay in the niche in the wall of his room.

An hour later, Mrs. Burgoyne, during a pause in the conversation, called "*Boy!* Some more milk, please."

Kesoo Vidyabhusana, standing attentively without, in the "dispense-room," ground his teeth. . . . "*Milk!*" His eyes rolled and the blood-shot yellow whites thereof gleamed unwontedly. "Milk!" . . . Doubtless!

The face of a butler of twenty years' standing had been blackened that day for a little *milk*.

He darted across to his house, and returned, hiding something beneath a duster.

"*Boy!*" called Mrs. Burgoyne. No answer

The "second-boy" was in the cook-house on business of boiling-water, or buttered-toast, or the nursery tea. The *hamal* was in the lamp-room; Ayah upstairs with the children.

"*Boy!*" . . . No answer.

"He can't have gone away to his house, surely," thought Mummy. . . . "I wonder if he has turned sulky. I'll go to the door and call. . . . Where can everybody be?"

Excusing herself to her guests, she left the drawing-room, crossed a wide passage that ran the length of the house, and entered the "dispense-room."

Kesoo Vidyabhusana salaamed profoundly.

"Didn't you hear me call? . . . What are you doing?"

Mummy was probably never nearer death—not even when her horse was half over a precipice; when she had a cobra between herself and the door in a tiny bath-room; when she shot at a panther with a twenty-bore shot-gun; when a mad camel bolted with her and made for trees and walls; nor when she lost herself in the desert while out riding.

For an instant Kesoo Vidyabhusana halted between two opinions. . . . Then, taking the revolver from beneath the duster, he put the muzzle in his mouth, pointing upwards, and incontinently blew out such brains as he possessed.

He did not do it beautifully—nor were there vine-leaves in his hair. In fact a head is hardly a head when a service revolver has done with it under these conditions. Deponent can testify.

Blood, and brains, and details look horrid on a white-washed wall.

Flies and ants are great opportunists.

Snowy garments make a good canvas for a blood-picture.

An eye is a thing of beauty—while it is in the socket.

Training is necessary for appreciation of the charms of the interior view of an almost-living skull. . . .

Mummy did not shriek, nor faint, nor indulge in hysterics. Instead, *she poured milk into a milk-jug and returned to the drawing-room.* There was nothing to be done for Kesoo Vidyabhusana, and there was something to be done for her guests. Bill was out, and the guests were all women. They must be got quietly away, and it was her duty to keep them from being horrified, shocked and upset, under her roof. . . .

Suppose the children came downstairs and found *it*!

Would they be horrified into permanent idiocy by the truly appalling sight?

Not they. They had once found a corpse on the beach—drowned sailor, suicide or murdered victim—and had "*played with it*," as they innocently and truthfully stated. "There was lots of funny lickle, wee bones coming froo his foots." . . .

Who would find the body first? . . . What would the finder do? . . . "*Unlucky*" was a mild term for this house certainly. . . . The first ayah, the cook, the head-syce's wife, and now the butler—all dead. . . . Consumption, abscess on the liver, and two suicides! . . . Well, the house couldn't be held responsible for these. . . . But it *was* unlucky! *And who next?* Bill? One of the idols? God forbid that the bare thought should come again. Leave the house? Then had the house an "Influence"? Rubbish-

stuff, and nonsense! Besides, if it had, was it stronger than God himself? . . . If there were a Fate or an Influence that marked one of them for Death—could not, and would not God avert it? It would be a poor compliment to the Omnipotent, to the Just All-Merciful Father, to leave the house, as though He had no power in it. Could one ever pray again, if one did leave? Could one even pretend to a religious respect, love, devotion, or fear again, if by one's actions one said, "There is Something greater than God here"? Certainly not. . . . Bill and the idols would die when and where God willed. But *not here*! Merciful God—*not here*! It would make one feel a murderess. It would make one hate God. It would make one a blaspheming atheist. . . . *Then leave the house!* . . . Leave the house and insult God and the Christian religion . . .?

Would these chattering parrots never go? . . .

"Aren't you feeling very well, Mrs. Burgoyne?" asked Mrs. Eller.

"I am wondering whether the corpse will walk in here and make blood-stains on my pale-green carpet, or drip . . ."

Good Heavens! Had she *said* the last words or only thought them! . . . By the still-placid looks on the faces of the ladies she had not uttered them. . . . Had the corpse moved. . . . Should she say, "Yes! For the sake of Mercy—go away . . .?"

"I am *not* feeling over-well, to tell you the truth," she replied. "It is the heat, I expect."

"Oh, you poor dear," said Mrs. Eller, "go and lie down at once; and get out for a nice drive after sunset," and she rose to depart. The others followed suit.

Mummy hoped that Mrs. Eller might win the Calcutta Derby Sweep that year.

As the last carriage drove away Mummy returned to the "dispense-room."

Where *did* all the flies come from!

Shutting and fastening the outer and inner doors she went up to the nursery.

"Ayah, go and tell Syce Sunnoo to saddle Grey Flea at once and ride quickly to Colonel O'Cloghry Sahib, the Civil Surgeon Sahib, and give him this. . . . If he is not at his bungalow he must ride to the hospital. . . . *Bolo ki gallop karo*"—and on her card she scribbled "*Do* come quickly."

Colonel O'Cloghry came quickly. It was his way.

"An' what is ut then?" said he, "Ye've been froightened."

Mummy took him to the "dispense-room." He opened the outer door.

"Suicide," said the Civil Surgeon. "Dead as a haddock. Been dead half an hour. What for couldn't the baste have done it in his own room? Don't you worry, me dear lady. I'll see all about this. You go and play with the babies. Up ye go now."

And Mummy went. God bless kind gentle Colonel O'Cloghry.

The *hamal* entered, saw the corpse of the man he hated, and, on the instant, set up a loud piercing wail. It didn't last long. Kind gentle Colonel O'Cloghry spun him round, and, as the wail died on his lips, the retainer of the house of Burgoyne passed out into the compound without using the four stone steps that led down to it.

Colonel O'Cloghry had played football for Ireland in his youth.

"If ye don't have the police here in two minnuts I'll give ye a rale hard one," said he, "*Police-sepoy bulao.*"

When Bill returned, the corpse had been removed. Likewise all that pertained to the corpse. But the removal of all that pertained to the corpse left marks and stains *in memoriam* and in many places. Bill wished that Kesoo Vidyabhusana were alive again for five minutes. He would give him his views upon his conduct.

A Eurasian police-inspector sat awaiting the master of the house. He had the revolver and a portentous air. As Bill, filled with wrath, entered his office-room the inspector arose and holding out the weapon, said, with inscrutable face of mingled mystery and reserve:—

"This is a revolver."

Bill put up his monocle, and considered both article and proposition carefully.

"By Jove, you're right," said he. "It absolutely is."

"It is *your* revolver," continued the keen lynx-eyed officer, "and there is the empty holster that fits it."

"Or which it fits, if one cared to put it that way," acquiesced Bill.

"You do not deny that it is yours, sir?" asked the stern-faced man.

"Far be it from me, since it is worth a hundred rupees," was the reply.

"A man named Kesoo Vidyabhusana, a butler, was shot on your premises with this revolver at or about 4 p.m. this afternoon."

"Nasty dangerous things, fire-arms: I always said so," answered Bill. "If you have anything to tell me

that I don't know, pray come to it at your early convenience. If you haven't—get out."

"I shall take this revolver with me," said the inspector.

"Then mind you bring it back," said Bill.

And that was the last he ever heard of the matter, or of the revolver, from the Guardians of the Peace.

"Poor little woman!" said Bill to his wife. "I'd give all I possess to have been at home when it happened. I can't understand why he didn't shoot—er—anybody else. Look here: shall we get out of the beastly place? Four deaths in four months! '*Unlucky*' is about right."

"Would you get out if you were alone here, Bill?"

"No, I wouldn't. But I have you and the children to think of."

"Don't you believe God can take care of us as well here as anywhere else? Don't you think it would show complete lack of Faith to go away?"

"I don't look at these things in the same way that you do, my dear, but I certainly hate the idea of being driven out of the house by any rotten 'influence' nonsense. I don't believe in 'unlucky' houses on principle, but, well—it's a rum coincidence."

"Don't let's go, Bill. . . . I should feel I had insulted God."

"I should feel a bit of a coward—but, as I said, there's you and the children. . . . Anyhow, I'll show you Barle's letter. . . . I wouldn't show it you before we came in, as I knew you'd not let it affect your decision, and it might have made you a bit nervous. He wrote it the day I told him we were coming here," and Bill produced the following letter:—

"Dear Burgoyne,

"Don't go. There's no sense in seeking sorrow you are sure to find. I don't believe in ghosties nor anything else except work and whisky—but I say *don't go*. If you do, I'll lay fourteen to one against your all being alive this time two years—and get no takers. The house is as healthy as Hades, but I'd as soon live in the one as the other. There's nothing supernatural around (for I don't believe in Mullen's ghost nor in that of Mrs. Reild 'walking' there), but there *is* a long and almost unbroken chain of coincidences, and personally I'd keep out of the way of it as carefully as I would keep out of the way of a motor-car. If the owner of Sudden-Death Lodge died and bequeathed that house to me, I'd *burn* it the same day, and give the site to the Parsi Punchayet for a Tower of Silence—it's all it's fit for. They say it's under a curse. I don't know anything about curses, except my own when dams burst (and damns follow), but I *do* know that, by a coincidence, of course, scarcely a family ever goes there without good cause for the bitterest regret then or later. No, I am not an old fool—but a bald-headed engineer of twenty years Indian service, who cares not a cuss for all the ghosts and 'curses' unhung—but *don't go*.

"Yours,
"J. J. BARLE."

"We won't leave, Billum," said Mrs. Burgoyne, and they didn't—voluntarily.

But there were Coincidences and Queer Occurrences as deponent can testify on oath.

CHAPTER VI

THE SELF-ELECTED MEMBER OF THE JUNIOR CURLTON CLUB OF KARABAD

"Face and figure of a child,
Though too calm, you think, and tender,
For the childhood you would lend her.

And her smile, it seems half holy,
As if drawn from thoughts more far,
Than our common jestings are.

And a dreamer (did you show him
That same picture) would exclaim,
'Tis my angel, with a name!'

And a stranger—when he saw her
In the street even—smiléd stilly
Just as *you* would at a lily."

"WHY can't *we* have a Club like Daddy's?" said Boodle to her brother. "Mummy goes to the Gymkhana with Daddy, and Daddy goes to the Karabad Club alone, and why shouldn't there be a Children's Club?"

Boodle was an extraordinarily attractive child, endowed with the rare combination of great wit, great beauty, perfect health, and remarkable cleverness. Yet, in spite of rude health, there was a curious quality of "feyness" and an air of somehow belonging rightly to another world than this. More than one old nurse, beside her own, had mumbled such prophecies as "Eh!—lovely!—but they'll never rear her," and "Let them make the most of the lamb—she ain't long for this world—mark my words."

Perhaps it was a strange rapt expression that sometimes came over the sweet face, even in the midst of play. Perhaps it was the always large pupils of her eyes. Perhaps it was a habit of saying such things

as " Good-bye, Darling, I shall never see you again," to people whom she never *did* see again. Perhaps it was a feeling that earth cannot long be the biding-place of a stray visitant from Heaven, nor the angels bear to watch the sure contamination and earthifying of one of themselves. Anyhow, there were few who knew Boodle without feeling a saddening sensation of impermanence and a presentiment of tragedy.

But while fairy-like, beautiful, dainty, elfin-sweet, and, in a sense, remote, Boodle was not a Ministering Child, a freak, or a prig. She was an infinitely interesting, ever-happy, healthy, human child—with an intelligence beyond her years and an undeniable communion with the spirit-world—the world that does not exist for those for whom it cannot exist.

The fact that she was named Estelle Lenore, and was as lovely and delicately formed as a Dresden-china shepherdess, did not prevent her being known to all friends and relations as " Boodle."

Her brother, known as " Fiquat " was of very different quality. Fiquat, or Ficcie, or Fic, was a sturdy person, a phlegmatic, and a solid. Waggish acquaintances would address him as " John Bull," " Prize Ox," and eke as " Fatty." He was matter-of-fact, practical, somewhat slow but very sure, and his intellect was strong and tenacious rather than quick. He had a charming disposition and an ever-ready sympathy. But no one ever suggested that *he* was not long for this world nor that he would never be " reared."

" Clubs are for men. I am a man. I shall have a Club some day," was the reply. " You will only have a Gymkhana and go to tabby tea-fights."

" Tabby tea-fights," was Buster's vulgar expression. Buster's vulgar expressions were all-too-frequently in

the mouths of these adored and adoring friends of that youthful man of war.

"Yes, but why shouldn't there be a Club 'speshly for children, and no Grown-Ups couldn't come into it, except as guests, and we should do just as we liked and sit around and buck, and look at picture-books like they do at Daddy's Club?"

"How do you know what they do there?" asked the boy.

"Daddy let me sit in the dog-cart and wait while he went to the library for a book, and I could see them playing with pretty balls and long sticks on green tables; and a lot of sahibs were looking at picture-books. They were sitting all in a row on long chairs on the berandah. And they play lawn-tennis."

"Let's ask Mummy about it."

And the Junior Curlton Club came into existence as a Sporting, Dramatic, Literary, and Musical Society, with the broad verandah, the play-room, and the nursery as the Public Rooms of the Club and the bedroom as Residential Chambers.

Of the Junior Curlton Club, Boodle was the President, Ficcie the Vice-President, Buster Borlayse the Secretary, Daddy the Treasurer, Mummy the Founder and Original Member . . . Ordinary members were the Dolls—Bessie, Queen Alexandra, and the six sisters named, by Buster, Margerina, Vaselina, Galantina, Gingerina, Gelatina, and Phospherina; Widdy the Second, the Persian cat; Venus, the bull-dog; Nibble and Twitch, the white rabbits; Nebuchadnezzar, the very tame mongoose; Nan the gazelle; Whiskerandos, the white rat; Polly Femious, the parrot; and Walter Henderson, the grey squirrel. Bill the Lizzard was blackballed and had a very doubtful

status, and Posho the Japanese doll was not a member at all—being bald as an egg. . . . You couldn't blame Bill the lizard for having no hair, but one has a right to expect hair on a doll, and how should a bald person hope for election to a *Curl*ton Club? Ethel Lawton, Phyllis Riach, and Dorothy Purser were honorary members.

The Club had well-defined rights and privileges and was on its honour not to abuse them.

Miss Brown, the governess, for example, was an ordinary member and exerted no authority in the club premises, although autocratic elsewhere. From her persecutions the Club was Inviolable Sanctuary—but it was a sanctuary never improperly used.

If Miss Brown desired to "make a remark" she made it in proper club-like language and in gentlemanly manner. Outside she might say, "Boodle, your hair-ribbon has come off again. Please find it at once and bring it to me." Inside she must say, "Mr. President, I believe you have lost something. Pray let me get it for you," and all due ceremony was observed. Outside the Club she might say, "Ficcie, your face is positively black. What *have* you been doing? Go and ask Ayah to wash it immediately." Inside the Club she must hold her peace or couch the remark in some such words as, "Mr. Vice, I believe you have fallen on your face in the hunting-field! Can the Club-servant do anything for you?"

And, as Mummy intended and contrived, the Club was a fine discipline, a training, and an educative force—it's unsuspected motto being "The trusted are trustworthy."

In the Club you were set free on parole, so to speak,—free from interference and restriction—with the result

that you behaved far better, because you were a real grown-up Club member, than when you were watched and warded, shepherded and marshalled, guarded and guided, prevented and circumvented by Miss Brown. When she was always saying "*Don't,*" you wanted to. When you were free to do as you liked, you didn't do it. You preferred to play being Grown-Ups, and Grown-Ups don't act the giddy goat. . . .

When you drank your lemonade in the schoolroom or at table, it was just lemonade, and perhaps you gurgled or sucked, or slobbered or smacked your lips, if only to annoy Miss Brown, who annoyed you. But in the Club you took it like a gentleman—and it was nectar. You said, "Have a drink, Colonel," and the Colonel looked at his watch and said, "Sun's below the yard-arm. Yeth, I'll have a thmall Thcotch-and-usual, General." . . . Then you called, "Boy! *Do chota peg lao!*" and Ayah brought what, to her dull soul, was just lemonade. Then you always handed the first glass to the Vice, or he to you, as the case might be, instead of grabbing for yourself, in polite and gentlemanly manner, and said, "Well, here's luck, Colonel," or "Chin-chin," and then the Vice—or you, as the case might be—would reply, "Here's weformation to us, General," or "Cheer Oh," according to proper ancient form, due ceremony, and right ritual. . . . Then you wrote a *chit*, and minded your spelling too. . . . Why, you even took your medicine kindly in the Club-house; and once, when the President, holding out a tea-cup containing a tablespoonful of castor-oil to the Vice, had said, "Here's luck, old chap," and drained it off—the Vice had *asked for some* wherewith to emulate the feat!

And Daddy who was present, smoking his after-breakfast pipe in the Club arm-chair had said, "Well

I'm d-d-d-damp!" and had explained, upon enquiry, that he had broken into a gentle perspiration.

Yes, the Club was great.

But there was an intruder.

One evening the Vice came in from his preprandial outing, went into the Club, accompanied by Venus and Widdy, and had a puzzling experience.

He sat him down on a nice low comfy chair, took Venus the Bull-dog between his feet, and turned to invite Widdy the Persian cat to come up beside him—and saw her bristling like a hedgehog, with her tail as big as herself, her teeth bared, and, with every sign of the madness of terror, staring, staring, staring—at the door. . . . He glanced at Venus to see if Venus were threatening her and she was meditating a bolt. . . . Venus was frozen stiff, with hair on end, his teeth showing—and *afraid*—Venus afraid!—crouching, growling, and staring, staring, staring—at the door.

The Vice looked towards the door.

There stood a queer-looking Sahib—very white, very mournful-looking, and his presence seemed to chill the room, making your skin go all prickly and little-pimply, like it did after a coldish bath. . . . The curious thing about him was that, though he was dressed in riding-kit, he gave the impression of being dead-white all over—and who ever heard of white riding-boots?

He *was* a rum-looking Sahib, and he appeared to be looking for something high up. . . . There was nothing whatever on the upper walls or ceiling, however, save three big punkah-hooks screwed into a rafter. . . . Then he advanced, and both Widdy and Venus simply vanished like lightning—but Venus wasn't chasing Widdy. . . . And the Vice felt he'd like human

companionship, somehow, and left the Club, without unseemly haste, in much perplexity and perturbation.

Who was the fellow, and didn't he know better than to enter a Club of which he was not a member? . . . Why were Venus and Widdy so terrified? . . . Surely no-one had seen Venus in a funk before, and even Widdy was a good fighter when put to it. . . .

This was a matter to lay before the omniscient, omnipotent, Olympic Daddy when he came home. Better say nothing to Mummy—she might be frightened at hearing that a strange man was in the habit of coming into the bungalow—for the Vice now remembered that he had seen him, 'twixt sleeping and waking, in the bedroom too. He had hardly noticed him then, and wouldn't have minded him now but for the strange conduct of Widdy and Venus.

Daddy came into the bedroom, as usual, that night to kiss the children, before he dressed for dinner. The Vice was awake.

"Daddy," said he, "there's a thtrange White Sahib comes into the bungalow. He came into the Club to-night and Venuth and Widdy bunked."

Daddy looked wicked.

"I'd like to have hold of the neck of the swine that told him that," thought he. . . . "Who told you that piffle, Sonny?" he enquired.

"Nobody tolded me, I sawed him mythelf," was the reply.

"And did he have a rope round his neck and say, 'Bo' or 'Moo'?" asked Daddy, believing it was a case of auto-suggestion after hearing foolish chatter and forgetting it.

"No. He had a muffler-hanky round his neck and he didn't say anything."

"Did he have feet like a goat's—like Lady Buffy's?"

"No Daddy—what tosh! He had riding-boots like any other Sahib."

"And then he waved his hands in the air and groaned a groan, didn't he?"

"No. He didn't wave anything nor he didn't groan anything. And he walked towards me and I went away. But Venus and Widdy bunked. I did their dags by going slow."

"And nobody ever told you a single word about this Sahib?"

"Nobodies. None body. I sawed him myself—and he made me prickle and be cold."

"Well, look here, Sonny. He's a very quiet nice chap and a thorough Sahib, and you offer him a chair next time he comes. . . . He likes to be called 'Old Waxworks'—so you just say, 'Hullo, Old Waxworks! sit down and have a drink,' and tell me what he says. . . . Call me if I am at home and we'll have a buck with him. . . . He wouldn't hurt you for worlds. You aren't *afraid* of him surely?"

"N—no! But I don't like him welly much."

"Good night, old boy."

"Good night, Daddy."

"Well, I *am*—dashed," said Daddy, in great perplexity.

CHAPTER VII

DEW, MILDEW, AND TIGERS

§ 1

HUSSEINABAD in "winter" is not an unpleasant place, and if you wear a large and properly constructed solar *topi*, a spine pad under your jacket,

black sun-glasses, and white clothes, you can go abroad at midday without much danger. You won't twice, however, if you can help it. But don't go there between April and July, unless you are in search of experiences—or haply of your last experience of all.

Horatio Hamilton Harris, formerly of Karabad, a short, thick-set, powerful-looking man, descended the stairs of the Husseinabad Government High School, of which he was Principal, garbed in a sweater, shorts, and stockings, for he was going to have his daily game of "soccer" with his boys—he and the School *versus* the First Eleven which he was training for the Kubristan Schools' Athletic Association Football Cup.

This he did because he loved his boys, loved football, and loved to keep hard and fit. Still more he did it because he knew that in no other way could he get to know, understand, and "grip" his boys; and because he believed that football is better for Indian boys than Wordsworth's "Excursion" or even Macaulay's "Essays." Better, possibly, than even Burke's "French Revolution"!

Perhaps the sun had taken its revenge upon H. H. Harris for his insolence in playing football before its very face, daily, from one till two, and made him mad—madder than most Sahibs. Certainly he held queer views.

Harris played his game of football on the bare rocky "field" and beneath the blistering sun with less than his usual enjoyment.

Two of his First Eleven forwards, and the best boy goalkeeper he had ever seen, had died during the night, of Plague—they had been playing football the day before—a Government Inspector was coming for the Annual Inspection of the school on the morrow, and a

confounded wandering M.P.—one Claney—a tripper of the most undesirable type, was coming to visit the school the day after.

The first meant the probable loss of the Kubristan Cup, the second a wasted day and some annoyance, and the last meant anxiety and some danger.

He had heard and read of the sayings and doings of the M.P., and he had made up his mind that even if the man *were* free to vilify his own country and her officials at gatherings convened by his "extremist" friends, that was no reason why he should be free to do so in Harris's school.

Harris had always held the view that one of his most important and urgent duties was to show the thousand young Indians in his charge that Englishmen are just, kindly, strong, honourable, and faith-keeping people—both by his acts and his deliberate teachings. . . . He did not believe in the policy of allowing the rising generation to form its opinion of England and the English solely from the seditious press and the salaried agitator. . . . Was it fair to the future householder that all he should know of the Sahibs should be an occasional glimpse of a much vilified and slandered Collector and—if he attended one of the very few schools with an English Headmaster—of a coldly aloof Principal who apparently only existed to punish him if he were reported? What could the "Educated Classes"—the only discontented ones—know of their Rulers under these circumstances?

So he systematically and honestly taught that the best government India had ever had was the Government of Peace, Justice, and Progress—of the British. He taught, as simple, plain truths, and with complete restraint, the ideals of fairness, equality, disinterested

endeavour, efficiency, toleration, and order, which the British hold in their capacity of Rulers, and he worked and behaved as he would have had every other Englishman in India do—unless he could work and behave better still.

Was it right, then, that this Claney should come and tell his boys whom he had brought up to admire England—and, incidentally, to love at least one Englishman—that "England was the Great Oppressor," that the hardest-working and truest friends of the Indians were "a parcel of self-seeking pension-cheating bureaucrats," as he had told one or two audiences of keen politicians already; and that they were "down-trodden slaves who ought to strike for their rights," and generally to unsettle their minds?

At best he could only show them a diseasedly conceited renegade Englishman fouling his own nest, and combining advertisement with gratification of his passion of class-hatred.

At worst he could offer a striking proof of the truth of what the bazaar rags—usually owned and edited by dismissed Government servants—said about England and the English.

"If an *Englishman* says it, surely it is true. . . . "The English People want us to be freed from taxation altogether and to have Universal Suffrage. . . . The Baboos are to hold all the offices and there will be no more famine, plague, or police. . . . There will be plenty of everything for everybody, and nobody will be failed at the Universities. . . . Then the Golden Age of Ind will have returned. . . . What wicked robbers and oppressors are these English bureaucrats with their passion for interfering and demanding efficiency!" . . .

If he lost his post—in itself no great loss—he would prevent both the best and the worst of the ignorant and impudent fool, Claney, as a plain duty to his charges—apart from questions of patriotism and pride of race.

If there were no Englishman, private or official, to contradict him at his "public" meetings, there would be one to censor him pretty strictly on this occasion. . . . *Was* there no one, by the way? He must ponder that anon. . . .

The Annual Inspection Day dawned, as such days do, and a thousand boys and thirty masters entered their classrooms with a sense of nervous dread. Not one of them knew exactly what he feared, but nervousness was the dominant mental state. In many cases, both juvenile and adult, this condition would change, on the entry of the Inspector and the Principal, to one of panic terror, wherein knowledge and common sense would be in utter abeyance.

Entering one of the classrooms of the Fifth Form, the Inspector demanded to hear some recitation, and picked upon an abject bundle of nerves—aged eighteen, and the father of three legitimate children—to recite.

Up rose Mahamahopadhyaya Lakhumalani Barrackgungewallah, green with terror, and launched into the "Ancient Mariner," of which the only lines that he could recall, though he knew the poem perfectly, were :—

> And all in a hot and copper sky
> The bloody sun at noon
> Stood right above the mainmast high. . . .

Not another word would come.

The gentle Mahamahopadhyaya stood as one turned

to stone, and wished from the bottom of his soul that he were lying comfortably on his funeral pyre and his first-born setting light to it.

"Go on, boy," growled the Inspector.

"There is nothing to be afraid of, my son," said Harris.

"Your boys seem exceedingly ignorant," observed the Official to the perspiring class-master.

"I assure your honour he knows it like his A B C D," replied the teacher. "He is like one drowning man splitting at straws instead of taking bull by forelocks."

"Then why doesn't he say it? Begin again, you,"

Master Mahamahopadhyaya took another wild leap at the Ancient one:—

> "And all in a hot and copper sky
> The bloody sun at noon
> Stood right above the mainmast high . . ."

and then fell to gasping.

"Well, what about it?" enquired the Inspector. "You told us that once. . . . Anything about the moon for a change?"

A ray of light impinged upon the agonized Mahamahopadhyaya, and, as one who grasps at a straw indeed, he chanted:—

> "And all in a hot and copper sky
> The bloody sun at noon,
> Stood right above the mainmast high,
> *And so did the bloody moon!*"

Harris fled and roared with laughter.

"One manifest astronomical absurdity," murmured the teacher, as the Visitor strode from the room lest he forget his great dignity and let his human mirth get the better of his official hauteur. . . .

In the Sixth Form he found a little balm after the

soul-harrowing ignorance of the other classes. The boys could all answer his questions "nicely." . . . He estimated a school by the bulk of producible knowledge amassed by its pupils. . . . Turning to Harris he said, "This seems to be your only decent teacher."

"For his sake I am glad you approve of his work. I am always chivvying him," replied Harris.

"Why? His boys know their work exceedingly well," said the Great Man. "I am very pleased with him, and shall give him special commendation in my report."

"That will be very nice for him," observed Harris.

"You mean you don't agree?" . . . was the reply. "Question the class yourself in my presence, my dear fellow," said the Inspector, "and see if they don't know their lessons well. Go on here where I stopped :—

"One impulse from a vernal wood
  Will teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good
  Than all the sages can."

Harris smiled unto his soul, and obeyed.

"Go on reciting, Rama," said he to the nearest boy.

Rama lifted up his voice and recited in a high singsong wail :—

"One impulse from an infernal wood
  Will teach you more of man
Of morrer levil and of good
  Than all this ages can,"

with great speed and fluency, but no punctuation.

"H'm—you repeat those lines, Krishna."

And Krishna girded himself up and stated :—

"One in pulce from a vernle would
  Will teach you more a man
Of moral he will Anne of Good
  Than all the Sage Iskan."

"H'm . . . I don't think either of *you* have got great good from the study of Wordsworth."

"You say the same lines, Abdul."

And Abdul roared:—

"Won 'im pulse from aver Nulwood
Wilt eat you more of man
Of more'll 'e villain of good
Than all they say she can."

"H'm . . . Have the boys ever seen this verse printed or written?" Harris asked the "decent" teacher, an industrious old crammer with as much knowledge of Education as a camel has of cookery.

"Nossir," was the reply. "But they all know the whole poem by heart, and I have given *many* notes. They know all allusions and meanings, and have parsed, paralysed, and anaphrased every line werbally."

"They have certainly paralysed the lines they have recited so far," said Harris.

"Sir, I meant paraphrased and analysed."

"Well, let's see how far they understand it."

"What does *impulse* mean?"

"Impulse is the act of impelling or driving on, the effect of an impelling force, force suddenly communicated, influence on the mind, from impel," chanted the boy asked.

"An admirable answer!" remarked the Inspector.

The teacher beamed.

"Have you ever felt an impulse?" continued Harris.

"No, Sir."

"Have I, do you think?"

"No, Sir."

"Has anybody?"

"No, Sir. They are in wood."

"H'm . . . What does *vernal* mean, Chatterjee Chuckerbutty?"

"Vernal is belonging to the spring, appearing in spring, belonging to youth, Latin *ver*-spring," sang the interrogated.

"Can you spring?"

"Yessir."

"Then are you vernal?"

"Yessir."

"Are you a youth?"

"Yessir."

"Then is everything belonging to *you* vernal?"

"Yessir."

"Tell me the name of anything vernal."

"A watch-spring."

"H'm! . . . What does *moral* mean, Bugwat Bugchandani?"

"Of or belonging to the manners or conduct of men, conformed to right, virtuous, capable of moral action, subject to the moral law, supported by evidence of reason or probability, instructing with regard to morals; as a plural substantive, manners; the doctrine or practice of the duties of life; moral philosophy or ethics, conduct, the practical lesson given——"

"Does it really mean all that? And are you a moral boy?"

"Nossir."

"Why is that?"

"It is evil, moral evil."

"Why is *moral*, evil? What do you mean?"

"It is saying so in the poetry, Sir. I am not knowing that."

"Can *any* boy tell me how an impulse from a vernal wood can teach us anything about *Man*? . . . No? Well, I am sure I couldn't tell you. . . . I wish one were free to teach you to speak, read, write, and under-

stand plain English, instead of wasting your time cramming unintelligible extracts and filling your note-books with rubbish so that you can get a piece of paper from the University proving that you are educated, while every word you speak or write proves that you are *not*. I have a great mind to refuse to let another one of you sit for the Matriculation while I am in the School."

Turning to the Inspector he continued, "I sincerely beg your pardon, but this comic tragedy, or tragic comedy, makes my blood boil. It is the funniest parody of education since the days of Mr. Squeers."

"I fail to understand you," said the Official loftily.

"I am afraid you do. . . . But if you are satisfied with the work in this class, so much the better for the teacher, as I said."

"I consider the boys answer very fluently, and will make a fair show at the Matriculation."

"Yes, I fear they are very fluent at answering 'intelligently anticipated' questions, but personally, I should like it better if they could *compose* a few sentences of plain English. . . . Is there any sense in Indian boys cramming a parody of Wordsworth and learning long lists of meanings of words they could not apply to save their lives—while they couldn't answer the question, 'How old are you?'"

"And if you didn't have the Matriculation Examination for your goal, what *would* you have, pray?"

"Well, since you have asked the question, I would have the production of good citizens for my goal. . . . I *have*, in fact, and regard the Matriculation Examination as my chief obstacle. I consider that Citizenship is a better object than Matriculation, and a training for it in straightforwardness, intelligence, and physique,

better than a training for the other in wearily cramming what is not understood and is of no practical use if it were. . . . But probably I am quite mad. . . ."

"God bless my soul! Do you want to abolish Education?" queried the Great One. . . .

§ 2

Arrived at his bungalow that evening, Harris cast all thoughts of school to the winds, for there, grinning, salaaming, and murmuring, "Tiger! Sahib. Tiger! *Pukka* Tiger! *Burra* Tiger!" was his old *shikari*—the man of whom he thought when people of a certain type declared that there did not exist an honest, grateful, brave, or faithful man among the lower classes of India.

For this ancient tracker of dangerous beasts was all four, and as good a man to rely on in a tight corner as a Highland soldier. Moreover, he was as hard as nails, as untiring as a wolf, as keen-sighted as an eagle, as enthusiastic as a schoolgirl, and as clever a hunter as Nimrod. . . . Good old Bagga! In spite of his one eye, his hideous face, his undeniable filthiness, and his worshipping of a clay snake, made with his own hands, he was a man and a brother.

"Well, Stout Fella," said Harris to the naked smiler, "and where is the tiger? In your pocket? . . . But no, you haven't a pocket—I wrong thee, good Bagga!" and the smile of Bagga widened a little, if possible, for the Sahib was evidently in merry mood.

"Where's your tiger?" asked Harris in the vernacular.

"But five *kos* distant, Sahib. . . . He came in the night and slew the best bull of the *patel* [1] of my own

[1] Native Government-official.

village, and dragged him half a *kos*.[1] . . . He has eaten but little, and must return to-night to feed. I have hastily erected a little *machan* for the Sahib."

"Look you, gentle Bagga, if your brother-in-law's step-daughter's young man's cousin has had the misfortune to lose his only cow from aggravated senility, and if you and he have had her dragged into a likely spot and have there elaborately scratched her with claw-marks, have then erected a drooping *machan* and arranged to share what you get out of me after I have spent the night there, I do solemnly swear that I will tan the hide of each of you in a most memorable manner."

Bagga gathered that the Sahib was casting doubt upon his veracity.

"Have I ever told the Sahib a lie? Could I deceive such as the Sahib with a *banao*[2]? Let the Presence waste no more time—but eat and make ready."

"And there really *is* a tiger's kill ten miles from here, is there, with a *machan* all ready? And to how many other Sahibs and '*Countree Sahibs*' have you sold the glad tidings?"

"Is this dust the salaried *shikari* of the Presence, or is he a black-faced bazaar-wanderer, babbling to foolish *chota-wallahs*[3] of *ishnipe*[4] when there are no *ishnipe*?"

"And to how many has the bereaved *patel* sold the sad glad news?"

"Sahib, I told the *patel* that if none but your honour heard of the killing, your honour would surely recompense him for the loss of the beast, doubtless doomed by your honour's gods to be the means of great *shikar* for your honour. . . . And said I that if any of the

[1] *kos* = 2 miles.
[2] Fabrication.
[3] Unimportant persons.
[4] Snipe.

village breathed a word ere your honour came, *his* cattle would surely die next and he encounter blows—with such a *lathi*,[1] perchance, as this I carry. . . . Doubt not, Sahib, but come, and bring gold for the poor *patel*."

"Come I will, and in this manner. . . . If I find a dead bull, clearly the victim of a tiger and killed since last sunset, I will give the *patel* ten rupees if no man cometh but myself. To thee will I give one day's shooting pay. If I kill a tiger I will give thee five rupees more. And if all the village has tramped around the bull, I will—er—tramp around them. . . . Await me."

With a light heart and high hopes, Harris ate a hasty meal, and gave orders for the making of sandwiches and the preparing of a flask of cold tea.

He then changed into khaki shooting-jacket, shorts, and putties, put together two twelve-bores, and filled his cartridge belt.

"Will the *machan* hold two, Bagga?" he asked.

"Assuredly, Sahib. . . . Shall this slave be permitted to sit with the Presence on the *machan*?"

"He shall. To keep the Presence awake. . . . Also to blaze away if the moon fails, the tiger proves to be a panther, and there is a charge at ten yards' range, when I fire. . . . Unlike yourself, good Bagga, I am not the father of a family—but I have a Mamma. . . . You can take this shot-gun and two buck-shot cartridges, and if you fire, save in the event of a charge after I have fired, the Lord have mercy on you. Bagga, for I will have none."

Bagga swelled visibly with pride.

[1] Staff.

"Will not the Presence take the rifle that fires five times?"

"He won't. . . . He doesn't want to annoy any short-tempered animal five times at ten yards' range, in the dark. He wants to smash his shoulder with a great big bullet to discourage jumping, and then to do the same for his skull or heart, with another one, to discourage everything. The moon will set about four and that's when he'll come if he doesn't turn up at nightfall: and if your tiger's a panther, he'll stalk *us* as likely as not."

And Harris slipped a couple of cordite twelve-bore cartridges with copper-nosed slugs into his hammerless, ejector, rifled shot-gun. This was a most useful and deadly weapon, equally serviceable for snipe and tiger—to all appearance an ordinary shot-gun but strong enough for cordite, and rifled sufficiently to make it target-accurate up to five hundred yards. The leaf-backsights lay flush with the barrel when the gun was in use as a shot-gun, as did a large "gloaming" extra foresight. With a "number five," say, in the right barrel, and a cordite ball-cartridge in the other, a man might carry it through any jungle with an equal mind, and deal faithfully with bird or beast, from jungle-fowl, partridge, or pigeon, to sambur, bear, or panther.

Giving Bagga a hurricane lamp, matches, a satchel, and a camera, Harris started on his ten-mile tramp behind the swift-footed *shikari*, buoyed up with the certainty of a twenty-mile climbing walk, the probability of a long and cold night's vigil, and the possibility of a very unpleasant death—such as one or two of his acquaintances had encountered. Why do the British do these foolish and unnecessary things? No

reason can be given for anything so unreasonable, save that they are mad Britons. When they grow wiser the Empire will grow smaller.

A glorious evening and glorious scenery, and a climb to sweat the dross and dullness and doubts out of you. Nothing better than keeping up with a hillman on a hill path to put you right with yourself and things in general —provided you are in fair condition. . . . Thank God for hills and hillmen and tigers and good guns, when you are fed up with things, and suffocating with civilization! . . . What a sad thing that the doctors of a few thousand good men slowly turning to old women under the blessed influences of that same civilization, cannot say to them, "Take your gun and cross that range of mountains after tea; there is an excellent chance of a tiger. Keep up with the hillmen I will provide in the prescription—as long as you can. Dose to be repeated once a week at least."

Oh, to have had that poor devil, who committed suicide the other day, out here for a night, before the impulse came. He would never have shut himself in his bathroom and cut his throat with a razor if he could have walked across these glorious hills in the exhilarating air of early evening, with a good gun on his shoulder and a little devil of a hillman to keep respectful of his staying powers. . . . He would have got his petty but cruel troubles in their true perspective from this height, and in this clear atmosphere would soon have seen that his little work and self were not essential to the progress of the universe. . . . Poor over-driven, worried, over-conscientious beggar! . . Fancy cutting his throat because his reports were behind and his debts were heavy, and Claney had undone a few years of his work! Better to have

undone Claney! . . . Yes, a man saw things in their proper light at this altitude and in this clear evening air as the sun did his what-was-it-westering-wheel. . . . "Hey, Bagga! let's pull up and have a pipe for five minutes on this rock. We aren't *all* hillmen, and we've done eight miles in two hours, up-hill too." . . .

Thank God for baccy and for the sense to know that its goodness is in inverse ratio to its frequency, and that the wise man has one smoke per meal—until he has done his day's work anyhow! . . .

Good old Pipe! Had that old beggar at Oxford! Cracked, blackened, caked from fat-thumb size to little finger size, the mouth-piece chewed through, scratched, dented and chipped. . . . Smoked him in a Canader on the Cherwell, in an African jungle, fishing in Norway, on the South African veldt, tramping with the troops on Brigade Manœuvres in Baluchistan—as an attached Volunteer Officer—on a camel in Egypt, on any number of good horses, on several liners, through many a grand game of golf and days of stalking, and in bed last thing at night, every blessed night, with the book that had to be read thus, or reading to be abandoned altogether in the strenuous rush of things. Good old Pipe and dear old Pal, you are a bit foul and gurgly, but I doubt if there is enough money about to buy you. Pity a pipe never tastes as good in a hot climate as a cheroot. . . .

"Come on, Bagga! We must be on that *machan* and settled down, still as mice, before sunset."

By Jove what a big cobra! . . . Is it worth while firing a gun so near the "kill"? Better not, perhaps. Lend us your stick, Bagga. Never let a snake live.

Lord! One feels young again up here, and there's positively enough air to fill one's lungs.

Is that the village? Come and let's interview the headman, and explain exactly what will happen to any prying ass that comes over to the "kill" after sunset—or before either. . . .

The villagers appeared only too willing to avoid the neighbourhood of the "kill," and were hurrying the buffaloes and cattle into the byres at an unwontedly early hour, a tiger in those parts being a novel terror.

The *patel* proved to be a lugubrious creature, for whom life held nothing more, now that his best bull was beef. Nor did he brighten perceptibly on learning that his loss would be diminished to the extent of ten rupees, if the Sahib was in no way disturbed during his vigil.

Going on a mile farther, Harris found that a fine bull had certainly been killed by a tiger or large panther. Its throat and neck were torn, and it had apparently bled to death, unless its neck had been broken. The carcase was almost intact, only a small portion of the rump having been devoured. . . . Obviously it had been killed the previous night, and it was ten to one that its slayer would return and gorge itself that night, either at sunset or moonset—the latter being some eight hours after the former. . . .

The *machan* proved to be four rickety bamboo stakes about eight feet high, joined at the top by four more enclosing a space about four feet by three. Across these horizontal sticks were laid a few rotten-looking planks, over which hay, grass, and leaves had been spread. Three sides of the platform were enclosed by a kind of thin hedge of branches, long grass and palm-leaves, while the fourth, the short side facing the 'kill," was open. From this side to the head of the bull was about nine or ten yards.

"If either of us, or the tiger, sneezes, that thing will come down," said Harris. "I hope it is a tiger and not a nasty, vindictive leopard. . . . If I wound a leopard ten yards from that perch, one or two of us won't see Mamma again, Bagga. . . . I trust you'll be nippy with the buck-shot if my two barrels don't decide him to stay below. If he is on the spring, you pull off both barrels at once. Two charges of buck-shot in the eye at ten yards will make him see things in quite a different light. . . . A self-respecting tiger would die at once for two twelve-bore slugs in front of cordite at ten yards, but you can never trust a leopard to do the decent and obvious thing. . . . Give me a bunk up."

With great difficulty and many struggles, Harris climbed on to the groaning *machan*, and got Bagga up beside him. After a few sandwiches and a drink of tea, he settled down, as it grew dusk, to a silent and motionless vigil. . . .

What luck if the beast came in an hour or so! What luck if it came at all! If it came up to the kill he would certainly be able to say he had shot a tiger—even if he did not actually get it. He couldn't very well miss it at ten yards. . . . Should he fire at the shoulder and cripple it first, or should he go straight for the skull? The neck was a good shot, but with a shaggy beast you might miscalculate. Yes, the shoulder would be best. If, in the bad light, you went a bit east or west you'd get the neck or heart very likely, and if you went low or high you'd probably break the leg in the one case, or the spine in the other. What a rotten light it was, between the sun and the moon! . . . Hard luck if the beast came between the two in the time of real darkness. If it came now he could choose the

spot to fire at. In a few minutes it would be a case of shooting at a darker darkness in the darkness. There would be trouble if one went and hit a panther on the toe or the tip of the tail. He'd have that *machan* down before you could smile. Probably land smack in the middle of it. . . .

A long silence. . . .

Good Lord! what was that? . . . A low menacing, blood-curdling growl from behind. By Jove, if that was a panther just crouching for a spring at the two asses on their absurd *machan*! . . . Were the stalkers stalked, the ambushers ambushed, the watchers watched? . . . It was useless to look over one's shoulder. The hedge of branches and palm-leaves was as effective to hide the beast as it was to hide the man. Then perhaps they *were* hidden? Perhaps he was growling at things in general or could smell the enemies he could not see. . . . If only he would come round to the front! . . . Waiting for him to spring from behind was nerve-shattering. . . . It really wasn't in the game! . . .

Another fearful soul-shaking growl from right underneath the *machan*. That was so much to the good. While he was there he wasn't springing on your back, anyhow. . . . Another growl. . . . Harris could not keep his rifle absolutely steady. He was in no sense afraid and would not have been elsewhere for untold gold—but the sensation of having a leopard or tiger within a couple of yards of you, he on his native heath, and you on a groaning rotten *machan* tied up with string and old bootlace, is, for the first time at any rate, exciting.

Confound the light and his quickened pulse and breathing. . . . He would muck it after all! . . .

He had hitherto never suspected himself of having nerves and being perturbable. . . . Doubtless he would be as steady as a rock in a minute. . . . Another awful nerve-shaking growl. . . . And then came the anti-climax as a rather small jungle-dog cautiously emerged from beneath the *machan* and began to tear at the flesh of the bull. . . .

The damned little brute! Harris was half minded to shoot it, for the fright it had given him. However, it had served a useful purpose in a way, for it had shown him that one does not face the wily feline in the jungles at night, with quite the same equanimity with which one discusses him over the walnuts. . . . What a glutton it was, and how unspeakable were its table manners!

Ha, there was the glow of the moon over the mountains. What was that song they used to wail at Oxford, in sentimental mood, after looking on the ale when it was black.

"Soft o'er the mountains, lingering falls the Southern moon," or was it "fountain?" . . . Wonder if the little dog's name is Juanita by any chance?

Nod.

No one with a name like that should make disgusting noises while eating. How sweet to stroll by tinkling fountains with a lovely Spanish senorita named Sybil Dainton, followed by a little dog named Juanita.

Nod.

Must not think about Sybil Dainton. . . . But really the manners of the dog needed excusing.

Nod.

See the dog to-morrow. . . . The original dog named Claney.

Nod. . . . Jerk!

Hullo, this wouldn't do—sleepy already! Didn't come out here to sleep. Wind getting up a little. How jolly cold it was. One ought to bring a sweater for this sort of job. No sense in arriving drenched with perspiration after a ten-mile climb, and then sitting still in a cold wind.

Was that wretched wild dog going to eat the whole blooming bull, or leave a little for the tiger? . . . Harris covered the dog with his rifle and took imaginary shots at its head, shoulder, and heart. Splendid light, with a moonlight foresight. Choose your spot and plug it. The tiger could come as soon as he pleased now. Just Harris's luck if the brute waited hours yet, and came after the moon set, towards the day-break. Never mind, if it made as much noise as the jungle-dog he'd have a pot at the noise, and chance it. If it were a panther it might well be his last shot this side of the happy hunting-grounds.

Nod.

Why were the parsons such fools as to teach kids about marble halls and harps and crowns and singing for ever, arrayed in well-starched night-shirts? What healthy child gave a damn for crowns, lingerie, and perpetual vocal feats? . . . If they wanted to bribe him unto virtue surely the happy hunting-ground notion was a lot more likely to be efficacious. . . . Neither that nor hymn-singing was a particularly useful existence, but the hunting one was at any rate wholesome and manly.

How well he remembered the *obiter dictum* of his hero brother, Bossy, who had a slight cast in one eye, "I don't in the least wish to sit on a damp cloud and dangle my legs, and I have no ear for music. One could at least roast chestnuts in hell. No, I shall

not put this penny in your measly missionary-box, Helen. I shall buy toffee, and, as I wolf it, I shall say to you,

> Not Heaven itself can take away
> The toffee I gorged yesterday.

So if the worst comes to the worst I shall have had toffee; whereas, in the other case, I shall have had regret for misspent money." . . .

Nod.

A hideous laugh brought Harris to a state of acute consciousness as a couple of sniffing, snuffling hyenas smelt around the bull. Apparently they scented the stale odour of the tiger, for they vanished, giggling horribly. Harris longed to send a charge of buck-shot into the loathsome and cowardly brutes.

Nod!

Sybil Dainton. . . . No, must *not* think about Sybil Dainton.

How bitterly cold it was, and yet the temperature was probably above seventy-five! . . . How still the night was and how beautiful. The mosquitoes were neither. Cramp in the right leg, an ache in the left arm that supported the gun, and a flea in the small of the back. A pity Bagga couldn't keep his fleas under proper control. . . . How infernally hungry he was, and how the "kill" stank—or was it Bagga? Mingled, probably. They'd "kill" him between them, the dirty beasts. . . . He'd get fever from the cold, malaria from the mosquitoes, diphtheria from the bull, plague from Bagga's beastly rat-fleas, and a mauling from a panther, very likely. . . . The world wasn't nearly such a nice place as when he came swinging over the hills in the afternoon. . . . Why wasn't he snug in his bed? Silly ass. Rot! He wouldn't be anywhere

else for any money. Hullo! Jackals! Were they following the tiger or had they scented the bull? It hummed enough for all the jackals in India to smell it. What filthy rows jackals make with their *I smell the blood of a dead Hindoo, I do, I do, I do,* on a rising note—or was it, *I'd love to pick the bones of you, and you and you?* . . .

Well, they gave the hunt a jolly good run, and that's more than the fox would do in this queer country. Fancy a fox lying down and squealing directly it saw the hounds! . . .

Sybil Dainton. . . . *No!!*

A bird flew overhead screaming, "*Did* ye do it," "Did ye *do* it," "*Did* ye do it." Those brutes wanted their necks wrung! How many times had a "Did-ye-do-it" warned the ducks he had been stalking—officious beasts! However, they were company to-night. . . .

How sleepy he was! . . . A night is as long as seven days. He'd be a walking yawn to-morrow—or rather to-day. . . . Bother Claney! . . . What would he talk about, to the students and what should one do if he started blackguarding the Old Country and the Royal Family, as was said to be his pretty way? Smite him on the lying mouth? Rise to a point of order and give him a thick ear? How were such creatures produced? *Nod.* Why didn't Claney come before the moon set? *Nod.* Well, his skin was worth sitting up all night for. It would look well on the floor of his smoking-room. "Yes! rather a fine specimen of a Claney. Sat up for him one night. Notice the thick ear."

Nod. Jerk! . . . Good Heavens, what a hair-raising row! A rumbling growl made his blood run cold.

It was more a vibration than a noise. You seemed to feel it rather than hear it. The jungle-dog's growl was a maiden's sigh to it. . . . Was it behind or in front? . . . The growl seemed to fill the world! . . Silence—and then a most suggestive cough. The sort of cough the Giant must have given as he glanced at Jack, and sharpened a knife as big as a scythe.

And then the light failed almost as suddenly and completely as when the electric light is switched off in a room!

The moon had sunk behind the great mountain range a few miles away. Harris could scarcely make out the form of the bull and doubted whether he would have guessed that there was anything there at all, if he had not previously known it.

He felt happy and excited, and there was no shaking this time.

Silence. . . .

Had the beast seen them and slunk off? . . . What was that? . . . A ripping, rending sound, and then a horrid snarl. It was eating—eating within ten yards of him, and he could not see it! . . . Was there ever luck like his? . . . Should he fire at the noise, or wait for dawn? . . . Might as well wait for the day of Judgment and expect to find the tiger still there. It wanted hours to dawn yet.

Perhaps his eyes, growing more accustomed to the darkness, would soon be able to make out the form of the brute. It was an eerie feeling to be within ten yards of a tiger's little dinner, hear him eat, and be unable to see him. . . . That bone-cracking was a nasty, suggestive sound!

It might be a panther, of course.

Lord! he was going to sneeze! What should he do?

Fire first or after? Because if he *did* sneeze, he must certainly fire. If it were a tiger it would bolt, and if it were a panther it would probably be on the *machan* next minute. According to the story-books one ought to see two green eyes gleaming "balefully" in the dusk. Nary a gleam here. And he could not see his "gloaming" foresight—there not being any gloaming. . . . Was that infernal sneeze passing off? No, it was prolonging the agony.

Softly he drew his handkerchief from his sleeve and laid it over the end of his gun. He could see more or less where it was pointing now, and—yes—surely that was a sort of big excrescence on the big loom of darker darkness, where the bull lay on the parched and yellow grass.

Was that sneeze coming or not? . . . It hung fire but would not pass off. . . . Best be ready anyhow! . . . Raising the twelve-bore very slowly and cautiously to his shoulder, he pointed the handkerchief-clad barrel at the far end of the mass, where it seemed that there was a kind of extension of the formless form. . . .

To sneeze or not to sneeze? Coming, coming. . . . BANG . . . a terrific snarling, coughing, roar . . . ATCHISSHU . . . BANG . . . a rending, tearing, clawing, struggle; a sound as of the death-struggle of two fighting dumb devils, and then—Silence. . . .

Well, he had shot one of the big cats anyhow, and, so far, he was alive to tell the tale—although on an eight-foot rotten *machan* in the dark, and with what might be a wounded panther within ten yards. And he intended to live to tell it, if a common prudence would serve the purpose.

"Sit you still, Bagga," said he to the *shikari*, who made his first movement for some seven hours or so.

"Sahib, the *shaitan* [1] is dead. He is a very *gareeb bagh* [2] now."

"How do you know he is dead?" asked Harris.

"He would have been up here by now if it is a panther, or fled if it was a tiger."

"Well, if he is dead he won't come to life again through our keeping still, and if he is not dead it is quite likely *we* shall be if we get in his way. There's no sense in patting wounded panthers or fondling stunned tigers. We'll count ten at dawn and give the fight to us if he don't get up. If he's not there we win on points—but perhaps you don't use Queensberry rules much. Anyhow, you sit on your joy till I say 'Time.'" . . .

Gradually the East grew paler and grey. . . . A lonely little wind sighed over the plain. . . . Birds began to stir. . . . A rose-pink flush glowed over the mountain tops, and amorphous masses took shape. . . .

Below were a dead bull and an equally dead tiger—the latter shot through the left shoulder and absolutely exactly in the right eye.

"A habit of mine to shoot 'em in the eye," observed Harris. "The first shot must be excused owing to the sneeze. Was almost afraid I might have missed the eye in the darkness with the second barrel!"

Bagga grinned.

"Come on, my fragrant bud, I *am* stiff."

Harris would have liked to throw up his *topi* and yell for joy, but he preserved a nonchalant demeanour. Not so Bagga, who danced and howled after unchivalrously insulting the fallen foe, and bringing horrible accusations against his near relatives.

[1] Devil. [2] Humble tiger.

Could he give the skin to Sybil Dainton? . . . No. . . .

"What a smashing blow the——" began Harris, and received a smashing blow as he said the words, for, with a terrific roar, a red and yellow streak shot from a neighbouring clump of bushes growing at the mouth of a ravine, and Harris lay beneath a huge tigress with the breath knocked out of his body, and the gun knocked out of his hand. Luckily he had the chin-strap of his *topi* down, and the great paw that ground his head into the earth did not touch his flesh. The other fore-paw ripped at the cartridge belt and the puttee which Harris always wound round him as a cholera-belt, when spending the night out of doors. With a growl the brute seized the leather gun-pad of his right shoulder and tore it off—and then raised its head as Bagga fetched it a sharp kick, precisely as he had done a hundred times to an over-inquisitive pi-dog or a bullock that would not "come over." . . . It was the last time that the terrible head was ever raised in life, for as it came up, the simultaneous discharge of a couple of barrels of buck-shot, at a range of twelve inches, turned it to a bloody mess of brains, teeth, skin, bone, eyeballs, and flesh. The tigress fell over dead, almost without a twitch.

"I think that will be sufficient for this morning," said Harris, who arose without a scratch or a bruise, "but I thought it was ten to one on the old Fakir of Karabad and Sudden-Death Lodge."

CHAPTER VIII

A CLANEY ECHO

La vie est vaine;
Un peu d'espoir,
Un peu de haine,
Et puis—*bonsoir.*

EVERARD DAINTON, I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner, and District Magistrate of Husseinabad, lived at high pressure. Boundless ambition, high ideals, fierce pride, a restless conscience, great strength, and a highly strung nervous system combined to drive him on as the Furies drive. Men said, "Dainton burns the candle at both ends," . . . "Dainton is over-engined for even *his* beam," . . . "Dainton's the biggest glutton for work in India," and called him Energy Dainton.

Not only must Dainton's District be run as no man had ever run it before, but it must be better run than any other in the Presidency. Not only must Dainton's results, reports, records, minutes, letters, judgments, and work generally, be of the best, they must be better than all other best. If work, exercise, and snatched meals could not all be crammed into eighteen hours, they must take twenty. Sunday was a good, useful day for clearing off odd jobs and minor matters for ten or a dozen hours.

Not only must Dainton's work be better than every other man's, but so must his play. No man must be allowed to ride farther or faster, run quicker, leap higher, swim longer, shoot straighter, row stronger, or hit harder. Let whosoever thought he could cut him down at hounds beware—unless he was prepared to break his neck. Let whosoever desired to compete

with Dainton at anything be prepared to lose or to be one of two dead men. For "Win or die" was Dainton's motto, and of Death he had no sort of fear. He had not died but he bore a few scars. And once or twice he had weighed the respective merits of various kinds of discreet and accidental-looking suicide, holding as he did, that in some of the situations of Life, Death is distinctly indicated for a man of honour. "'*Cowardly?*' my dear sir! Rot and rubbish. It's the coward who lives because he is afraid to die. '*Relatives?*' If they prefer you alive with dishonour, they aren't worth considering."

But how should dishonour ever come near Everard Dainton, one of the finest members of the finest service in the world? . . . And to this question, self-propounded, the never still small voice of the restless conscience whispered, "Your uncontrollable and devilish temper."

Honourable, as conscientious a man as ever stepped, Duty his God, straight as a gun-barrel and true as steel, Dainton's temper was vile; at times a demoniac obsession, and Dainton went in fear of himself.

As a boy he had been feared and respected by his schoolfellows for his high courage, unyielding tenacity, imperious determined manner, and appalling temper —the last an attribute always much regarded by boys and other savages. "Ginger for pluck," quoth his admiring fag philosophically after a blow, "I wish *I* had got red hair and a temper, like him."

To Dainton's school came a queer powerful Negroid half-breed (early yclept "Zulu" by the boys), who displayed a reckless, blind, regardless quality of temper akin to Dainton's own. Dainton loathed him, and they

fought frequently, purposefully, and to a finish, with varying result but one quite unvarying feature—the victory or unconsciousness for Dainton.

The pair went to Oxford together, and actually, in smug and sober England, fought a determined duel, as three other men, alive to-day, can testify. It came about like this.

Both were runners-up in the Middle Weights, for the Inter-'Varsity Boxing and Fencing Tournament, as well as in the Foils. The "Zulu" was chosen for the fencing team, beating Dainton by sheer strength and endurance. In the final of the Middle Weight selection competition, the two met once again, and, after two extra rounds, Dainton won on points. The "Zulu" took his defeat badly, shouted an insult at the referee, and, in the dressing-room, growled at Dainton, "By God, I'd give anything to fight you with something a little more satisfactory than fists."

"Name your weapon," said Dainton promptly.

"Foils," shouted "Zulu" instantly.

They fought in the ruins of Godstow Abbey at six o'clock one morning, with murderously sharpened foils, and arrayed in "zephyrs," shorts, and gymnasium shoes. Two romantic-souled and intensely discomfortable youths acted as seconds, and a cheery, bloody-minded, incompetent medical student was "surgeon." When all was o'er these three decided that they had had the time of their lives, but—never again.

The duel was fierce and desperate. The "Zulu," with a hateful grin of assured superiority, opened with a swift lunge which he turned to a feint as he felt the commencement of the parry, and got home sufficiently near to tear the inner side of Dainton's short sleeve, within an inch or two of his heart. But, if rage lent

a force to his thrust that made it terrible, it also lent it a violence that made it unskilful, and Dainton's riposte skewered the "Zulu" through the lateral deltoid muscle of the right shoulder. In vain the delighted "surgeon" yelled to the combatants to "hold on a minute"; by mutual and unspoken consent there was to be but one bout, and it was to last as long as both could stand and see. . . . Drawing back, "Zulu" gave "invitation number two" in the Italian style, with a tempting opening. Dainton fell into the trap and lunged with all his strength. Depressing his sword to the right "Zulu" allowed his opponent's blade to miss his thigh by a hair's breadth, and, as it cleared him, turned his own point upwards, and, sliding his hilt along the advancing and deflected steel, he thrust Dainton through—but only through the flesh of the side—the sword reappearing an inch beyond the point of entry. . . . As "Zulu" drew back, Dainton made a double feint which was successfully parried, a single one that was parried wildly, and then a simple straight thrust that would have ended the fight had not the "Zulu" leapt swiftly back in the act of discovering that what he had treated as a preliminary feint was a home thrust. As it was, he got a good inch of Dainton's foil in the thick muscle of his right breast. The "Zulu" was, from that moment to the end, a wild beast, an infuriated fiend, without policy, judgment, or skill.

Leaping at his opponent, who was now in the far more dangerous and deadly rage that is white and cold and quiet, he received a stab in the thigh, through madly beating his enemy's sword downward as the latter lunged, and a thrust in the neck as Dainton, in the midst of a hurricane of "Zulu's" wild lunges,

realized that attack is the best defence. The pace was too good to last, and the "Zulu," bleeding freely, breathing stertorously, almost blind with rage, sweat, and mortification, needed cool and cautious handling.

He got it.

Parrying steadily and warily. Dainton gave ground slowly, waiting for a sure chance to riposte as the thrusts grew wilder. . . . For a second "Zulu" paused with his sword held horizontal before him. Quick as thought, Dainton crossed his opponent's *foible* with his own *forte*, pressed, turned his hand under and lunged. Too late "Zulu" sprang back as the blade came under his guard; the point found his shoulder and his sword fell from his hand.

Dainton set his foot on it, and then stepped back and saluted. . . . "Zulu" snatched up the weapon and rushed at Dainton who lunged quickly and ploughed "Zulu's" forearm from wrist to elbow. Changing the foil to his left hand, "Zulu" lunged, stumbled, and fell.

"I don't wish to fight you like that," said Dainton.

The reply was an oath and a lunge. . . . Stepping back Dainton changed his own sword to the left hand and felt that if his opponent was a practised left-hand fencer he was done. "Zulu" lunged again, and again fell. In the act of rising he collapsed and fainted from loss of blood. The duel was finished. . . .

It was from this hour that Dainton began to take himself in hand and to go in fear of his mad and diabolical temper. Lying in bed, tended by the aforesaid bloody-minded and incompetent medical student (for the sake of secrecy) he had ample time for reflection, and saw his last and crowning folly in its true perspec-

tive. He stood, or rather lay, aghast at the lengths to which his uncontrollable temper had led him.

A nice thing for his people if the "Zulu" had killed him! Nicer still if he had killed the "Zulu" and been hanged or imprisoned for life! . . . He knew it was not courage. Courage would have laughed at the unsporting ruffian, and refused to do anything so preposterous. It was just sheer damnable accursed temper, and it was about time he got the better of it. . . . Was it *his* fault that he had been born with a terrible temper, any more than it was the other man's fault that he had been born a half-caste? . . . No, but it was his own fault that he had never tried to curb and conquer it. . He would set himself to fight himself as he had so often fought others. He would punish himself rigorously for each outburst of temper of which he was guilty. He would have a tariff of penalties, and he would stick to it rigorously.

He did. Many a day Dainton passed without food or without tobacco, according to his offence against the code he drew up for himself; and immeasurable good the self-imposed discipline did him. His temper improved and his ebullitions of wild uncontrollable rage became fewer and more brief.

And then he passed into the Indian Civil Service, and, in due course, went to India.

India does good to no man's temper. To that of the man who habitually overworks, habitually takes too much violent exercise, eats hurriedly at irregular hours, has too little sleep, disregards the sun, and uses alcohol—it is fatal. Dainton did all these things, and had a "liver" through taking prolonged and frequent cold baths.

By the time he had been in India a few years, his temper was, upon occasion, less a temper than a disease, a madness, a seizure, a possession by a furious devil. The self-punishments were terrible—and unavailing. Sooner or later after a cruelly severe one, a trifling matter would anger him, and then Everard Dainton, cultured gentleman, keen sportsman, excellent administrator, and accomplished scholar, was, for a short space, a dangerous lunatic. And so Everard Dainton feared himself.

Moreover, Everard Dainton, loving, kindly husband, devoted, self-sacrificing father, was feared, and, at times, hated, by his wife and only child. The angry stinging word to the one, the hasty passionate blow to the other, though most bitterly repented, could never be unsaid and unstruck. Forgiveness might be pronounced and forgetfulness might be attempted by the woman, but scenes of rage and violence slowly and surely completed the work, begun by neglect, consequent upon the sixteen to eighteen hours of daily immersion in work and sport. Sybil Dainton had learned to look elsewhere for sympathy and companionship—and Dainton knew it.

Kisses and outward show of affection might be given by the child, but angry shouts and sudden banishings, punishments and blows had undermined affection. . . . . Reggie regarded his father as a danger to be avoided —and Dainton knew it, and the iron entered into his soul.

Was Father in the bungalow? Yes. Then let small boys beware. Let them walk delicately, play quietly, speak softly, and, above all, keep out of the way of the Sahib.

Little harm would have accrued in the child's case

had the angry word and slap been disciplinary; but he was conscious of no wrong, and the foolish father, in his agony of self-reproach, abased himself before the boy, called himself a savage brute unfit to have a child, and apologized humbly. . . . Outward reconciliation and forgiveness followed and were—outward. . . .

. . . . . .

Everard Dainton sat at the desk in the office-room of his bungalow, angry, and hot of heart. His head throbbed, and that beastly fever had got hold of him again. He was conscious of a dull gnawing pain in his liver, and his hands tingled so that he could hardly sit still. He longed to leap up and seize something, tear something, smash something—or somebody.

He had suddenly turned faint and giddy when he came in from the hard midday gallop that he had had to undertake. If he hadn't sat down quickly and put his head down between his knees when everything swam before his eyes and he swayed as he stood, he would have fainted, fainted like a puling girl.

Take leave? Not he. . . . He would simply refuse to be ill, and, if the worst came to the worst, he'd die standing. He'd die in harness if he couldn't live. Let him work, work, work . . . who said he couldn't work this morning? Who said a man couldn't do good work because his head was throbbing and he felt as though he had not slept for years? He would put his head in iced water and then get into his pyjamas and be cool and comfortable. Who said he couldn't work to-day? . . .

On returning to the room he found that his peon had put a letter on his blotting-pad—a letter written on cheap paper in an unformed hand.

Dainton read it. . . . *What* was this? He re-read it. . . . The damned insolent hound! Was he mad? He "proposed" to do all that, did he! And he thought that because the alien scum of Jewsditch had chosen him as their worthy representative he could come and make hay in Dainton's District, did he? . . . . The impudent blackguard! . . . Proposed to come and stir up the Husseinabad mill-hands, did he? . . . . Well, he was apparently coming on his own and "independent" of Government, as well as uninvited. . . . . Then let him be careful! . . . By God, he might learn the penalty for "conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace," if not for "incitement to rebel, sowing disaffection, and endeavouring to bring his Majesty's Government into hatred and contempt." . . . . How did the words go? . . . Was it "conduct of a tendency to bring into hatred and to excite disaffection towards the Government established by law in British India"? . . . Surely he knew them by heart? . . . . How queer his head felt! . . . Curse the fellow! . . . . Who had made him a ruler and a judge—before he had learned the very elements of good taste, good manners and common decency?

What did he say? . . . "*I propose coming to have a look at your methods of administration and how your fellow subjects are satisfied with your conduct. I intend to form an independent opinion and publish the same in fulfilment of my duty to my constituency and in obedience to the mandate of the public which are your employers and take a profound interest in the welfare of their fellow subjects in India. I shall thank you to make all arrangements for me to see the mills, to hold a public meeting (of Indians only), to inspect the gaol and the government school. I shall not require your personal attendance as*

I am accompanied by an Indian gentleman who is most courteously acting as Interpreter, but I shall expect you to put me up as there is no European hotel I am told, and you are paid handsomely to entertain visitors. I shall arrive . . ."

Oh, he would, would he? Perhaps he would also depart! And he, Dainton, was recently boasting that his was the most contented and quietest mill-population in India!

What could be the fellow's motive? Sheer advertisement, or was he so diseasedly conceited as to suppose that he could do anything in a few days towards solving problems with which men of experience, brains, training, and honesty had been coping for years?

"Put him up!!" . . . Should he take absolutely no notice of the ignorant, impudent, and malevolent lunatic until he began incitement to riot or something that would justify his issuing a warrant for his arrest—or should he interview him and warn him? . . . No. Have to put him up—of course. He understood that he had already achieved the wrecking of a Mission bungalow and school, and the assaulting of two lady Missionaries, as the result of his speeches to his "fellow-labourers and brother working-men"—skilfully interpreted—at Nagarali. . . . It was a crime to let the fellow run loose! . . . It was a wonder he had been allowed to slink off unmolested. . . .

A pity the decent, honest, happy-go-lucky public at home could not be clearly informed as to what a fellow of this type could do, and did do, in India. A useful record so far for the Imperial Legislator—some wretched, harmless coolies in gaol for rioting,

two devoted and noble women in hospital, and their work of half a lifetime in ruins!

And God alone knew what aftermath of plotting, murder, and hanging, from the criminal fool's mouthing of "The great Socialist Party and all the millions of British Working Men are watching your brave and glorious struggle with breathless interest, O, my friends—and what do they see, my friends—that you are the slaves of a parcel of bureaucrats. . . ." etc.—all duly reported.

And Dainton sprang to his feet, "seeing red," as he thought of William Tom Claney and his kind, and what they have done in their insensate conceit, ignorance, and malevolence. . . . How ill he felt, and into what a rage he was getting! . . . He had been better lately—had not lost control of himself for weeks. . . . The seditious, mischievous, impudent rogue!

In a black rage the unfortunate man settled down with a heroic effort to grapple with his work.

What a nightmare mass of figures! Why did some of the columns stand up in the air at right-angles to the plane of the paper? It was not usual! How difficult it was to push them down among the rest! Perhaps Claney had been among them, filling them with lies, and inciting them to rise—from the paper. . . . Who could add figures while they whirled and spun and turned right over? Fancy seeing the under side of a figure—it was not usual! Curse the figures! If they would keep still a moment, he could add them. He was quick and accurate at work. Curse that infernal noise too—was it in his head, or where? Didn't they know he was in the house? Was a man to have no peace in his own house, and just when the figures were in rebellion too—rising at the instigation . . .

and suddenly the door burst open and little Reggie rushed into the room, fleeing with shrieks and laughter from his fat and panting old ayah—the deep desire of whose soul was to see the Chota Sahib asleep on his bed that she might get away to her tiffin. The wakeful spirit of the merry boy, who loathed the daily siesta that took him from his play, stood between good old Rukmibai Ayah and the vast heap of rice garnished with strange vegetables and spices, the curry, chuppatties, ghee, and sweetmeats that awaited her in her little room at the bottom of the compound.

Looking behind him, screaming pungent taunts, and thinking his father was out of the house, Reggie rushed upon his fate. . . .

Did nothing warn you, Mother, lying on the cane settee in your pleasant boudoir? Was your novel interesting, and was the punkah well and truly swung? Was there no cold breath of passing Wings, nor any chill Presentiment, Wife, as you idly swung a shapely foot and admired it? . . .

Claney's letter had completed what illness and overwork had begun.

Dainton sprang to his feet, livid, foaming, possessed of a devil, mad—and struck the child sharply across the side of the head, and, with the other hand, caught up his riding-whip—a rhinoceros-hide switch. . . . With a shriek of "Nahin, Sahib! Reggie Sahib *narty* nahin hai!" the faithful old woman did a deed of rare courage and devotion in daring to face the terrible 'Dipty" Commissioner Sahib in his wrath—and incidentally to risk the stability of that heap of rice, 'the sole prop of her declining years," and the one remaining passion and dissipation.

With a shout of "*Jao*," [1] Dainton pointed to the open door by which the pair had entered, and, seizing his son by the arm, he dragged him across the room, opened the door of his own bedroom and flung him in, slamming the door behind him as he staggered back to his desk, holding his head, racked with the unspeakable agony of the ache of incipient typhoid fever.

He did not happen to glance at the bed towards which he had hurled the child.

(Did nothing disturb or trouble your slumbers, Mother?)

"If he won't sleep in the nursery with that old fool crooning to him, let him sleep there alone!"

Shriek after shriek rang out from the bedroom, sounding dulled and far off through the thick teakwood door and heavy curtain. . . . Shriek after shriek, and a scream of undistinguishable words. . . . It was awful, heart-rending, terrible. . . . Yes, but it was temper, and he would not go to him—yet. . . . The little beggar wanted curbing. . . .

Shriek after shriek from the bedroom and a piteous blood-curdling scream of "*Daddy! Daddy!*" and again a scream of undistinguishable words.

Dainton turned to go to the child—he seemed hysterical. . . . No, he would be firm. . . . It was only temper. He would go to him when he was quieter, and make friends.

Scream after scream from the bedroom. . . . Temper, that was it!

Temper? *Temper?* And what of himself standing there with a horse-whip in his hand, seized to strike

[1] Go.

a baby with, his own baby, saved from his brutal assault by an old native woman!

A frenzied, agonized appeal from the bedroom. . . . Let him cure, or at least punish, his own accursed temper before he spoke of a baby's temper. . . . *Temper!* Good God—and he with a horse-whip in one hand and the other tingling still from a blow aimed in temper at a laughing child! . . . Well—the punishment should fit the crime anyhow.

And, walking to the desk, he laid down the switch and took up a heavy ebony round ruler, two feet in length, and raised it above his head. Placing the left hand that had struck the child on the table, he smote it with all his might again and again.

Shriek after shriek from the bedroom! . . . With every shriek he struck with all his strength. . . . Yes, there would be a kind of poetic justice in striking himself once for every scream.

How curious his hand looked with the blue weals, the swollen veins, and the welling blood. . . . He must strike harder, he could scarcely feel the blows—now. . . . This was something like a fitting punishment—the hand that had seized the switch pounding to pulp the hand that had struck the innocent laughter from a baby's face!

Silence now in the bedroom.

One more blow with all his might and he would go to the child, take it in his arms, comfort it, and solemnly swear that if he ever struck it again in wrath he would cut off the hand that dealt the blow.

And then he fainted.

When he came to, he arose and dragged himself heavily towards the door to release the boy and humble himself before him, prior to carrying him to the nursery.

Opening it, he saw the dead body of his little son —and the Gliding Death darting round and round the room.

Everard Dainton was one of the few European officials who have died of snake-bite.

Mr. Claney sometimes did more harm than he knew —but rarely more than he would have rejoiced over, had he known of it. . . .

Silly people were not wanting who connected Dainton's name with that of Sudden-Death Lodge, Karabad.

CHAPTER IX

MORE OF THE JUNIOR CURLTON CLUB OF KARABAD

THE Junior Curlton Club, Karabad, was, as has been said elsewhere, a Social, Sporting, Musical, and Dramatic Society of which Boodle was the President and Ficcie the Vice. Strictly speaking, Ficcie was not eligible for Membership as he had no curls, but it is a pretty state of affairs if the President's own brother is to be blackballed when proposed by the President and seconded by the President's, and his own, mother!

And Ficcie had proved to be the thin end of the wedge, albeit distinctly fat, and curliness was, in time, by no means a *sine qua non*. For instance, there was Walter Henderson, the Grey Squirrel. He certainly had no curls, though his tail was of the darlingest—a fluffy dream. Nor were Nibble and Twitch, the Rabbits, of curly habit. Still less was Polly Femious, the Green Parrot. But the six young ladies from the Burlington Arcade, Gingerina, Phospherina, Vaselina,

Gelatina, Margerina, and Galantina, were perfect specimens of English curly-haired goldilocks. Buster was their Godfather and gave them away in baptism, as well as giving them in birthday gift, the privilege being the graceful recognition of the munificence—and carrying with it the right of bestowing the names.

Mummy was a credit to the Club in the matter of living up to its distinctive title, and both Daddy and Buster owned a distinct "wave," which hinted at curls toward the end of the fortnight that always terminated in what Mummy called "barberism." Mummy was a connoisseur in "cuts," and both Daddy and Buster always approached her after receiving the attention of the barber, with mingled fear, diffidence, and hope. "Oh, *Buster*," she would say upon occasion, "you *have* had it cut short. You look barely hatched, much less half-fledged. And there is a great silly piece waggling on the crown. Go and get me a pair of scissors at once."

Or, under happier circumstances, "I didn't say you could get it cut, but it is very nice. Just right. If there is anything worse than a long-haired man, it is one that looks like a German student with his head shaven to display what may, or may not, be a genuine *Schläger* duel cut."

Daddy, when accused, always denied that he had had his hair cut at all. According to him it had ceased growing as the result of a fright when he was a child.

There had only been one case of blackballing at the Junior Curlton, and that was over a candidate who ought never to have been proposed. This, as stated, was Bill the Lizard. It is all very well to have fairly elastic rules and to be generous in their interpretation, but really, what is the good of proposing

a person who hasn't a hair of *any* sort, as a member of the Junior *Curlton!* However, Whiskerandos, the White Rat, his "stable-companion," was allowed to introduce him occasionally as a friend. Amir, the rocking-horse, only just scraped in by virtue of his mane and tail—of undeniable horse hair (though difficult to curl). Nan, the Gazelle, had received one blackball. Posho, the Japanese doll, had not even been put up, although very anxious to join, and Gingerina, who had one day entertained him (as a Burlington "towny") to tea at the Club House, was felt to have been exceedingly indiscreet, and to have lost caste to some extent. Ayah was the Club Butler and wore a badge when on duty as such.

The Nursery with its broad verandah was the favourite part of the Club premises, and there were certain rules of conduct that members and visitors were expected to observe. . . .

Boodle rode up to the Club steps on Amir, rocking at a terrible gallop. Dismounting she said to an imaginary servant, "Here, Boy, walk him up and down under those trees until my *syce* comes. Don't let him stand about. And tell the *syce* not to take him to the Stables until he is cool. I want him brought round at eight sharp. Loosen the girths, man, and put the stirrups up the leathers. Don't you know *anything* about a horse?" And the President strode into the Club, slapping his "boot" carefully with a heavy racing quirt. The President was arrayed in a little silk frock, a pair of putties of pale blue ribbon, an enormous sun *topi*, a pair of military spurs (requiring management), gauntlets almost to the shoulder, a Sam Browne belt, and a haughty manner.

"Ah, General, how's the liver to-day? Feeling chirpish?" inquired the President, in a deep and sepulchral voice, of the Vice.

"How do, my boy?" replied the Vice. "Gad! I've got a Head 's morning. Very late last night."

"Come and have a prairie oyster then," replied the President; "nothing like 'em for a Head or a Mouth."

This was a favourite opening when the Club met. The Buster gambit, in fact.

"Come outside first and have a look at a bit o' flesh I'm considering. I am not sure if it is quite up to my weight, otherwise I'd say 'Done.' Very nice b.w.g. Arab mare," he continued.

"I believe in Walers," said the Vice. "'Speshully for weight."

"Yes, but this is a very showy beast. Nice action. Look well on parade. Shouldn't hunt it, y'know."

The rocking-horse was duly and solemnly inspected.

"Did you say it was a l.b.w.?" asked the Vice, feeling for windgalls and other leg blemishes.

"No," replied the President, "a d.-b. c.-f."

"H'm. I don't much like the spavin on his back."

"Well, I'll get Lieutenant Buster's opinion before I do anything. Come and have a whisky and brander."

"I'm entertaining some gels," replied the Vice. "Givin' 'em tea and moosic. Come and see me through."

"All right, old chap. Awful nuisance these women! We'll have a pipe and some more prairie oysters before dinner, when they're gone," said the President gloomily but resignedly. "Who are they?"

"Oh, those six sisters. You know, Ginger and Vasling," . . .

"Oh yes. Bit gushy and giggly. I'm expecting my friend Buster and one or two more."

In the Club Drawing-room (the big rug in the corner) the ladies were discovered sitting in a row, staring straight to their front, and awaiting their host. They must have come while the horse was being examined. How stupid that hall-porter was!

Other members dropped in and took their tea—some joining the President's table, some not.

Venus was warmly welcomed—as bull-dogs always are, by right-minded people, upon all occasions. But Venus had no business to swallow the Vice-President's cake as he turned to speak to a guest, nor was it his duty to smell the milk-jug so hard as to knock it over. It was difficult for the most truly charitable mind to think it was an accident, when he licked up the meandering pool and then positively *smiled* with tail and mouth. No one could accuse Venus of crying over spilt milk.

Walter Henderson on being asked what he would "take" was understood to ask for cake. Nibble and Twitch took lettuce, without being asked, and in a most unclubable manner bolted with it to the other end of the room and then had a kind of tug-of-piece. Venus said nothing but looked worlds. Polly Femious did not show good manners either, in walking on the butter. However, it was a most agreeable tea-party, though marred by the absence of Buster.

After tea the Vice asked his guests if they would like a little music, and, finding they would, rendered a selection on the tin trumpet. The President then obliged on the drum, and Venus came in where he imagined there was, or should be, a chorus.

Finding the other guests quiet, the Vice offered to

give them a novelty in the shape of a song through Daddy's megaphone. "It's Buster's song, weally," he stated honourably, "and I think it is a hymn."

Having procured the collapsible megaphone and displayed its wonders to the deeply interested Venus, he warbled the "hymn" dear to Buster:—

"King David and King Solomon they led mos' wapid lives,
Their lady friends were numerous and numerous their wives,
But when they found themselves growing old they got weligious qualms—
King Solomon w'ote the Pwoverbs and King David w'ote the Psalms."

"I don't think we ought to sing hymns in the Club," said the President, "but thank you *so* much, Mr. Vice, for your charming song. I *do* hope you didn't find the piano too bad."

And then a curious thing happened as the President gave a simple new-world air on the shilling violin. Venus lifted up his voice (and his head—at a tremendous angle) and positively *sang*! It was the jolliest thing that had ever occurred in the Junior Curlton. The members were differently affected. The President and the Vice shrieked with glee and laughed till the tears ran down their faces. Walter Henderson, the Grey Squirrel, seemed suddenly turned to stone, and did not move for minutes. Nibble and Twitch bolted as one rabbit. Widdy the Second, the White Persian, arched her back, inflated her tail, and looked as though the music disagreed with her. Nan, the Gazelle, was moved by it—right out of the Club in fact.

The Six preserved an icy silence and the Club Butler said "*Wah! Wah!*" . . . When sufficiently recovered, the President and Vice showered encomiums upon the performer, who bore them modestly

and could not be induced to vouchsafe an encore, though earnestly besought.

"Perhaps he'll sing again if I do," suggested the President, and forthwith burst into song, beginning unpromisingly and un-Presidentially with

> "My Mother said 'That cheese is tall,
> Turn him on his back or the house will fall,"

and responded to un-Vicely by the other with

> "Nearer and nearer I hear him come,
> Hit him on the head and he won't hum."

Strophe and antistrophe waxed and waned, but Venus had shot his bolt and lived upon his reputation. . . .

. . . . . .

. . . "You can be a Tiger, Fic," said the President. "I shall be Nelson out hunting Polar Bears on an elephant, and shall meet you unexpectedly. Amir can be the elephant."

"I want to kill you though," replied the other Pillar of the Drama.

"But, my good little Goat, Nelson was *never* killed by a Tiger! Don't be 'normous."

"Oh, Boodle, I'm *not* 'normous. How could you say such a dreadful thing! You'll have to let me kill the elephant then, or else I shall be the man that shot Nelson at Trafalgar Square."

"All right, we'll play that, only it wasn't Trafalgar *Square*. That's where Nelson is on the post with the lions round the bottom waiting for him. It was Trafalgar Bay. Daddy sings it. I'll walk up and down here on the deck, and you be the Foreign Yolk, and climb up the mast of your ship and shoot me in the left eporlip."

"Where's that."

Nelson indicated the sub-central aspect of the chest, and commenced a haughty pacing of the quarter-deck, what time the wicked French marine climbed upon the play-box armed to the teeth with a gun that fired its own ramrod some yards, a pea-shooter, a bronze pistol loaded with pink percussion caps, and a bow and arrows.

The battle raged, and Nelson sent for Hardy. "Belay there, Hardy," said the Admiral, and presumably Hardy belaid. Hardy was then understood to recommend his beloved chief to take off some of his stars and garters. "Not a single order, Hardy," was the reply. "Not a star nor a garter, though I really wear 'spenders, you know. In fact, I'll put on some more orders, I think. Get me a few more medals and stars and lockets out of my jewel box, Hardy, and you must not go on the bridge or talk to the man at the wheel."

The French marksman fired and the missile missed. It fell short, in fact. Foiled, the unsparing foeman took up another weapon, and a well-aimed pea smote the Admiral on the hand raised to point the "Victory" to victory.

"Aow-oo," howled the wounded hero, adding quickly, "ahem! I am wounded, Hardy, but don't you worry." Hardy apparently didn't.

"My brave fellows must not see me fall," continued Nelson faintly, and, as he did not fall, they were spared the sight—for a while.

"Bang off a whole jolly broadside and strike their silly flags," roared the Admiral, evidently feeling much better. The insidious French foeman in the fighting-top apparently understood English, for he mocked and mimicked the Admiral in a most trying manner, and

ended with the coarse and horrid epithet, "'Normous Ass."

The naval hero flushed and appeared to meditate a personally conducted boarding-party, but, as a well-aimed arrow hit the wall with some violence an inch or so from his ear, he continued to pace the quarter-deck instead. Hardy was suddenly understood to observe, "They run! They run!"

"Who run?" asked Nelson eagerly.

"The enemy, Sire," replied Hardy, in a voice exceedingly like that of his master.

"Heaven be praised. Then I die happy," said Nelson.

And at this cue the French marksman should have taken some cognisable step, that Nelson might have suited the action to the word.

But the wretched foreigner, instead of paying strict attention to duty, was bending his mighty bow at Widdy the Second, who had incautiously strayed into the thick of the fight.

"If you *want* to play, Widdy," said he, "of course you can do so, but don't blame me afterwards if you don't like being in battles."

The arrow winged true, and incontinently Widdy fled, and stood not upon the order of her going.

"Then I die happy, . . ." repeated Nelson.

Venus awoke, yawned largely, and boarded the "Victory." An arrow smote him, and he retired with dignity to the verandah and worried Posho to death.

"THEN I DIE HAPPY, . . ." shouted Nelson (adding *sotto voce*, "Silly little sniffler.").

Bang went the bronze pistol, and the Admiral undeniably jumped. He then fell to the deck and fetched a fearful groan.

"Cover my orders now, Hardy," he whispered. "My faithful fellows must not know I am down and out. . . . If any of them saw me fall, tell them I am shamming." . . .

The murderer descended from his coign of vantage, remarking, "I don't shoot 'em sitting, as a rule, but Nelson's such a snifty pig I had to, or he would have hurt some of us." Then a great change came o'er him, as turning his tunic inside out and Daddy's forage-cap hind-side before, he appeared on the quarter-deck of the "Victory" as the faithful and heart-broken Hardy.

"What ho! my liege," he remarked. "And hast thou got it in the neck this time in truth and sooth?"

"Fair," said Nelson.

"Art thou really biffed?"

"Aye! Aye!" responded the dying hero.

Hardy shook his fist at the foe, and cried in his woe, "Oh you nasty 'normous sneaks! He could do you one hand."

"Carry me below, Hardy," said Nelson, "and don't drop me. When I am dead, chuck me down the cock-pit. It's the proper thing."

"What an awful hole you've made in your knickers, Hardy. You'll get into trouble, I expect," he said after some moments, as Hardy turned away to hide his emotion.

"I may have done it climbing up the mast," replied Hardy, "or it may have been eaten out by that big moth on the wall up there, when I wasn't looking. They are awful 'structive things, you know. One ate all Mummy's furs once. . . . The sneak will have flown away by the time the hole is found out. And *I* shall be blamed for it, you see if I am not!"

" It's a hard world," replied Nelson, who seemed to be feeling better again.

Suddenly he groaned " Water," in a sepulchral and awful manner.

Hardy supplied the desired beverage, but Nelson remarked, " Thy need is greater than mine. Drink."

" I am not thirsty, thanks, your liege," said Hardy.

" Yes, you are, silly, you're a wounded soldier being carried past," said Nelson testily. " Drink it, I want to die and play something else."

The wounded soldier drank noisily, and Nelson then murmured, " Kiss me, Hardy, and don't slobber." That being done by the loudly blubbering old sea-dog, Nelson died with dreadful contortions and curious snorts. . . .

As he arose for the next reincarnation, the Club butler announced visitors, and Mummy's voice was heard asking whether she might introduce guests, as Mr. and Mrs. Guddle wished to call and see the Club. The President and Vice welcomed the visitors hospitably, albeit the President had murmured " Snifters," as he heard the names, and hurriedly removed his riding impedimenta; and the Vice had backed him up with " 'Normous," as he too doffed his " disguise."

" Boy, bring tea for five quickly," said the President.

. . . . . .

Mummy was called away by cards on a salver, and the entertainment of the unbidden guests fell, for some minutes, upon the children.

. . . . . .

" And what do your parents do on Sundays? " continued good Mrs. Guddle.

"Why, didn't you *know* the hunt meets Sundays and Thursdays? You have to get up at five and have breakfast, and then you hack out to the Meet and there are your hunters waiting for you, and you change on to them, and when the Master is ready, off you go to where he is going to make the first draw. Then, if the hounds put out a Jack, there is an awful lovely gallop. Mummy got the brush last Sunday and Daddy got the mask!"

"Yes," contributed Ficcie, quite untruthfully. "We ate the mask for dinner."

"Then they come home to breakfast," continued Boodle, "about twelve o'clock, and we go down and have our tiffin with them, and they tell us all about it. Then we hog in the afternoon. . . . Daddy got dragged one morning. Hobberel it was."

"Yes," said Ficcie, "hundreds of miles, but he didn't care. Full lick."

"Hell for leather," corroborated Boodle.

"How do you mean—dragged?" asked Mrs. Guddle, now too numbed by repeated shocks to suffer much more.

"Why, *dragged*, you know. His horse came down as it jumped a bund (it's not really up to fifteen stone), and, as it got up, the off stirrup caught his near spur, and it galloped after the hunt.—Hobberel!"

"A visitation!" said Mrs. Guddle.

"He liked it," said Ficcie. "I shall often be dragged when I hunt."

"And he thought it was Kingdom Come and then his spur-strap broke," added Boodle.

"Always have *kutcha* spur-straps," said Ficcie. "I do."

"If your father had been at church he would not

have been in that painful and precarious situation," said the Reverend Benoni, who evidently had a logical mind.

"No," said Boodle, "that's the worst of church."

Luckily Mummy returned at this moment, and Mrs. Guddle's face turned from frosty winter to sunny summer in a surprising manner.

"Your little darlings have been telling me that you and your husband hunt on Sunday mornings," she said sweetly.

"Yes," said Mummy, "that, and the Thursday morning run are absolutely the only exercise my husband can get in the week—and I won't let him go alone. If he breaks his neck, as his father did, I want to be with him. If I didn't accompany him I should sit watching for them to bring him back on a hurdle, and be grey-haired in an hour. When we are together I don't think of it. Though he was dragged the other day."

"Yes, your darling little girl was telling me about it, and—you *don't* mind my saying it, I am sure—but she used such a *dreadful* expression."

Mummy tried to look grave as Boodle smiled.

"How terrible! What was it?"

"Oh! I *couldn't* bring myself to repeat it, but it had reference to speed and—er—leather."

"You must be mistooken," observed the Vice. "I have been here all the time, and she didn't say nothing about leather at all, excep' 'Hell for leather.' You don't think *that's* 'normous, do you? It means '*juldi*,' you know, 'quick.'"

"I am afraid they have been listening to unguarded horse-talk, Mrs. Guddle. I must really speak to Bus—er—Mr. Borlayse. They are tremendous pals of his,

you know. He is so good to them, and *for* them, too."

"*Good* for them!" said Mrs. Guddle. "I should hardly have thought the —er—*leather* remark indicated that. . . . I *cannot* think that he is good for them."

"But *I* can, and we'll leave it at that," said Mummy distinctly.

"Good Ged!" said Ficcie, suddenly consulting a faceless and workless watch, "Chuckin' out time! Club closes in two ticks," and the Reverend Couple apparently regarded this innocent remark as a hint.

The Reverend Benóni Guddle was a thoroughly lazy, greedy, and useless person, who had never helped a sinner in his life, and had done not a little to disgust a good many, and to keep them from essaying the path that Mr. Guddle trod.

Soldiers detested him. "Soapy Sammle" was the only printable term of endearment they applied to him, and their criticisms of his grossness of habit, obliquity of eye, and sliminess of manner were not diminished by his habit of addressing the civilian congregation as "my beloved brethren," and themselves as "you men." The sermon he preached to the Lowland Light Cavalry on fasting and self-denial, while his eyes stood out with fatness, and his breath was, in the words of Trooper Wullie McPhairson, "a graand advairtisement o' his whuskey," was as fine a proof of their discipline as any they have given on the stricken field. Not a lip curled.

He had been born in India of poor, if not honest, parents, and his knowledge of England was that of a visitor.

Unfortunately, the fact that his type is rare, is discounted by the undeniable truth that one such

Chaplain can do far more of harm than the best can do of good.

The Reverend Benoni Guddle and Mrs. Guddle—née Nasturtia Beryl D'Costa—agreed that the Burgoynes were a lost and Godless couple, and that their children were a wicked, unslapped pair of little wretches, of whom their neglectful and unchristian parents have cause to be bitterly ashamed.

They awaited a "judgment" at Sudden-Death Lodge.

CHAPTER X

THE SECRET SOCIETY OF KARABAD

"THEN if I could prevent his making any stay here, I should really be doing you a service, should I, Mrs. Burgoyne?"

"A service! My dear Buster! You'd make me your debtor for ever. But how could *you* prevent his coming to Karabad?"

"I don't suppose I could, but it is possible I might be instrumental in considerably curtailing his stay. I know how anything that worries Bill worries you, and if I could only do something for you, there is no price I wouldn't pay."

"Romantic Buster! Don't meditate calling him out, for he wouldn't come. But I am *so* anxious about Bill. His work is his life, as you know, and if this fellow starts a riot here and Bill has to ask for troops, and shoot his own people, it will be the death of him. . . . That is just what happened at Krishnapur after the man had encouraged the seditionists and harangued the mill-hands. . . . The very sight of an Englishman, obviously fresh from England,

hand in glove with them, gives the mischief-makers tremendous moral support. Probably even *he* doesn't realize quite how strongly they pitch it to the mob in his name—or surely even he would pause."

"Not he, he's just as far an agitator as he dare be, and he finds that in spite of what he says, there is marvellous liberty of speech and licence of political demonstration."

"Besides, one never knows what may be in the aftermath of trouble of this sort. If the worst comes to the worst, and Bill has to use the heavy hand—and he'd use it on his brother if necessary—the half-educated, venomous, evil scum that form their precious 'patriotic political secret societies' have only to find some poor weak-witted boy, give him an automatic pistol, tell him he is a second Garibaldi and avenger of the slain heroes, have him photographed to screw him to the point where his diseased vanity and morbid craving for notoriety exceed his natural cowardice, and there is an end of Bill the first time the criminal lunatic can get behind him."

"Yes, and then a beautiful six-months' trial and all the fame his poor feeble little soul desires before murmuring the Oriental equivalent of '*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*' on a scaffold. '*Pro patria*' by Gum! Pro examination-failure, pro stuffed head and empty stomach, pro years and years of education that was the learning of what he finds he cannot earn a living on, and the stunting of everything that goes to make a man! . . . Look here, Mrs. Burgoyne, I, Buster Borlayse, and your devoted servant, promise that Claney shall do no harm in Karabad." . . .

"Don't go and get yourself into trouble or do anything rash or foolish. . . . I would absolutely prohibit

anything of the sort, only I believe you might positively be the means of saving life if you could really head him off. . . . I have never breathed freely nor slept soundly in India, I believe, since poor Mr. Johnson was murdered. . . . If the truest friend and the wisest helper Indians ever had, was not safe, who is? He simply lived for the welfare of the people he ruled, and was the most unselfish and generous of good men. . . . Could the mad fools have done the country they pretend to love a bigger injury?

"No. Don't let's talk about them, Mrs. Burgoyne. The cowardly vermin who use mad children to do their unspeakable murders, and who would see India sink under the sea if they could thereby get a competence elsewhere! There isn't *one* of that anarchist gang of 'patriots' who would vote for a measure that would elevate all India and mulct him five rupees a month, or hinder one that would ruin her if it gave him five. . . . And the worst of it is that people are apt to judge three or four hundred million people by them, and lump in with them the splendid lovable fellows who work hard for a scanty living in contentment and gratitude, and the staunch good fighting men who have shed their blood for their revered Monarch all over the—ah—shop."

"Fine speech, Buster. . . . Get on a chair. . . . When it is over, tell me how you propose to *shikar* Mr. Claney."

"Don't know, myself, yet. I'm going to see my little friend Snooty, and possibly Jerks. . . . We'll put up something useful,—D.V. . . . Well, I must wander into the cold world. We do a night-march manœuvre, to-night. I lead the armed host by compass and with one eye on the line of the water-pipe bund. . . . How-

ever! . . . Fare thee well, Queen of my—ahem—Mrs. Burgoyne."

. . . . . .

Entering the "chummery" occupied by himself and three other subalterns, Buster found his particular pal Snooty O'Rourke dispensing liquid hospitality to a ruffled and blasphemous sample of the Twentieth Punjabis, that day arrived from Nagarali for a signalling and musketry course.

"And the unspeakable, unsaleable utter swine actually hinted at some kind of mutiny according to my orderly, who speaks jolly good English and is a splendid chap. Let's bash him," observed this young gentleman to O'Rourke, as Buster entered and bade Diana respect his immaculate trousers and to sit quietly on his knee like a perfect lady, instead of being demonstratively sentimental over him. And Diana sat upon his knee and kissed him as he put his arm around her waist.

Diana was very long-waisted like most dachshunds, and a very lady-like gentle doggie.

"Tell us the story simply, as to a little child," said Buster, when he had gripped the hand of his old Sandhurst friend. "If it's Claney, I second your motion. I'm on the bash, some, myself. I owe him a little *personally*."

"Why, he's in the hands of about the thickest lot in Asia, playing their game absolutely blind—and that *fakir* cove, that our Subadar Major kicked out of the lines with his own fair foot, is certainly in touch with them. . . . We knew that a few of our men had been to one or two of his meetings, and my orderly gave me some hints as well as some facts. . . . I must tell you he is

rather an exceptional chap this orderly. . . . He was at the Husseinabad High School, and when his father, an old army pensioner, died, Hamilton Harris, the Head, who is a pal of mine, kept him on and paid his fees and let him earn a bit as cricket and football groundsman and instructor to the little 'uns. . . . Then, when he had passed the exam. they sweat them for, he took him to our Colonel and asked him to give him a job as regimental munshi to the officers, and schoolmaster to the *butchas*,[1] as well as taking him on the strength—because he was a thundering good sportsman and the son of a great old bird who had served under Bobs in the Mutiny and Afghanistan and was hung over with medals and decorations like a Christmas tree. . . . Well, as the Old Man was keen on starting hockey in the corps, and this chap was top-hole, and Harris's father had served with the Old Man, he took the chap on, and he's a jolly useful bird, and specially attached to me because I take him out shooting, and run the games, and so on. . . . And he understands English as well as you or I. . . .

"Well, we put him on to nose around and we got a bit of a shock, no blooming error. . . . Why, these blighters who are running Claney had got their precious 'literature' into the lines, and there was a 'special' meeting for sepoys, and a private reception afterwards for choice spirits and men known to his infernal 'committee,' and there had been strenuous attempts to get native officers to attend the latter. . . . The skunk ought to be tarred and feathered in every village in the Empire."

"Silly waste of good tar," said O'Rourke. "One pint, boiling, at bed-time, would be more like it."

[1] Children.

"Well, our downy old Subadar Major attended both, thinly disguised as a dam civilian, and took the names of the sad and silly sepoys who were at the 'public' meeting; but as he don't know a word of English, he can only say what Claney's interpreter says he said, and apparently that was rank sedition, not to say incitement to mutiny and rebellion. . . . Apparently he blackguarded his Sovereign and called the Viceroy a lot of funny things, and generally did his little possible to cause assorted bloodshed. . . . Bloodshed I approve personally—but fancy the unthinkable swine trying to tamper with the Native Army in a country like this! . . . I don't wish him any worse than he deserves, but I'd just like him to be in an out-of-the way district with his wife and children during a Mutiny. . . . My grandfather was shot in the back on his own parade-ground in the last one, and my grandmother saw her baby bashed to death against the wall before she was pinned to the same wall with a lance. . . . Also her brother went into a certain room at Cawnpore and got his boots bloody, trying to find a relic of his family—which was down the well. . . . There was the print of a tiny bloodstained hand on the sword-gashed wall—might have been his own little girl's. . . . He believed it was! . . . No, I have no use for Claney in India. I am keen on my men, and I like the people—but keep Claney and his sort off the map, I say."

"And what about your orderly at the private meeting?" asked Buster.

"Well, I'm coming to that if you didn't buck so much," said the Twentieth Punjabi. "He says that the merry Claney was on his perch being buttered by as dangerous a gang of swine as you'd find in Asia, and awfully bucked with himelf, and calling these stinkers

his pore oppressed brethren, and telling 'em to cheer up for he'd see 'em righted, and spoutin' about a glorious campaign against tyrants and blood-suckers. . . . And they put him more and more artful questions and egged him on, and talked about Tolstoy and Mazzini and Garibaldi until they found he took no stock in 'em, and then they changed it to Russian bomb-chuckers and the murders of kings and presidents, and that sort of thing. . . . Then they said how rare were the brave souls who'd be martyrs in Freedom's sacred cause, and strike a blow for home and beauty. . . . Then some of the visitors struck for home, and the bold remnant drew it thicker and thicker, and then, our man swears, Claney hinted that there were other ways of outing tyrants, and observed that you could bash 'em pretty finally without incurring the death-penalty . . . and fully and completely sympathized with them on the dull market in martyrs and the prevailing tightness in self-sacrificing spirit. . . . And he bolted next day having sown the good seed."

"It's incredible," said Buster. "Why on earth isn't he run in?"

"On what grounds? . . . It's a free country, and he knows enough to say nothing in public that is in any way actionable. . . . Can't an English M.P. stump a free country and 'interest himself in the social, economic, and political questions of the hour'? . . . If he gets misreported, misquoted, misrepresented, misunderstood or misinterpreted, is that *his* fault? If any of his friends are over-zealous or excitable and work up a riot after he has passed on to another sphere of activity and usefulness, is that *his* fault? What is a bit of a street row and one or two old mission-

ary women in hospital, and a wrecked mission-house, compared with the spread of political light and the preaching of the gospel of freedom, trades-unions, and strikes? . . . What's an odd murder or so compared with the free advertisement of Claney, M.P. for Jewsditch, the duly elected representative of gents who can hardly speak English? . . . Do be reasonable, my good Buster. You really can't arrest a man without a warrant, or issue a warrant until he does something agin the law, I suppose."

"Taking the law into one's own hands is a very wicked thing to do, I know, but I feel just a little wicked myself at present. Let us be wayward and wanton and wild and wicked for once, in spite of our bringing up," said Buster.

"As how?" inquired Snooty, who had a rather prominent nose.

Buster pondered a moment, and then, with a sad slow smile, observed, "My children, I who speak to you have a yearning. Strange unwonted and beautiful longings fill my breast. I have mysterious impulses."

"Y'ought to marry at once," said the Punjabi subaltern.

"Sign the pledge to-day," said O'Rourke, "before it goes off."

"I feel void," continued Buster. "Something lacks, and life is not rounded off. It is borne in upon me that I must——" he paused. The others stared.

"You must what?"

"*Join a secret society!*"

The others still stared.

"And so must you. And so must Jerks. You all yearn to, likewise. You don't know *how* you yearn—but you will in a minute. I am going to harangue

you on your rights and privileges. No. I am not an Ass. Nor am I drunken. Listen. Are we not free and independent men, my brethren? Is it not a political right of free and independent men to combine and organize in defence of rights and privileges they hold dearer than life?

"Is it not, I say, my down-trodden fellow-brothers and family-members, our right and privilege to combine and organize against what we hold most—er—disgustin' and beastly? It is. It is more than our right, it is our bounden duty to combine for mutual protection and defence and improvement. An English M.P.—God bless the merry gentleman—has come all the way to India to tell us so. He has come with a Message. Oh, my brethren, how solemn a thing is a Message! And the Message appears to be this:

"'Let any class or sect or section or gang or outfit or crew or society or community or lot or set or jing-bang, that don't like anything for any reason, forthwith and straightway up and biff it with the maximum of violence and blood.' And if 'it' is a 'him' let them do it more so. No matter whether the state of affairs be for the greatest good of the greatest number, nor whether the 'him' be for the greatest good of the greatest number. No matter if either be essential to the welfare, or the very existence, of the greatest number—up you get with a yell and you start to biff.

"What beautiful words are these, my little white brothers! And more. Unless we are misinformed, this great and wise statesman from over the seas has laid it down that if you have any personal and private grudge against another, it is your right

—nay, it is your duty, to—ah—lay him out, in a painful and final manner.

"Should you fear the coarse and brutal gallows, and yet be willing to be beautifully fed and carefully tended in gaol, you may and should—hamstring or blind him.

"But on this point I am not absolutely clear and informed at first hand. Now, my dears, what I propose is that we jolly well take the kind gentleman's advice and combine for our self-protection and the furthering of our private interests at once.

"Having done that, we will make ourselves into a deputation from ourselves and wait upon the kind gentleman for further enlightenment as to what we, as free, independent and self-respecting souls, should do to one who grievously annoys us, and—worse—holds a more distinguished and important position, as well as being wealthier. *And we'll act on his advice.*"

"By Gum and by Gravy!" ejaculated O'Rourke. "We will so. Stap my Vitals! You can also Rabbit Me while you are about it," he added generously.

"Great and glorious and good!" said the Twentieth Punjabi. "Let me be in it, or I'll blow the gaff."

"In it you are," said Buster, "and so's Jerks, and we'll take Soomar, Bardul, Chattur, and Ali Khan for local colour."

"Take 'em where?" asked O'Rourke.

"You'll see, fair maiden, if you wait a bit. It has all sprung suddenly into my head, cut and dried, like Venus from the head of Jove."

"Never seen a dried Venus," observed the Punjabi. "I've seen some of them cut, though."

"Aren't you thinking of Andromedary or Palace

Athené. Your Classics are frightfully rusty," said O'Rourke, a little severely.

"I don't remember one of that name at the 'Palace,'" said the Punjabi, who was an Authority, "nor yet at the Pav. nor the Empire. Perhaps she——"

"We trifle," interposed O'Rourke; "go on with the gorgeous idea, Buster. I'll give a silver statuette of you to the mess, if ever I come across one. Add the Detailed Idea to the General Scheme, and let's rehearse."

"Get hold of Jerks first. He's busting with ideas and the best actor in India. . . . This is going to be better than backin' winners. . . . Meanwhile, one of you get hold of an alarum-clock with a good healthy tick to it, and a rowdy bell on it. The sort of thing you set for four o'clock of a hunting morning and have to chuck your boot at, in the middle of the night. . . . Also one of those cubical cigar boxes in lead paper. . . . Poor Claney! If I live and all goes well, he'll remember his week-end in India. He'll take the next holiday at Southend-on-Sea."

Jerks fell upon the neck of Buster when the plan was unfolded to him, and shook hands with himself in congratulation upon having survived to see that day.

"An e.p. tent and some drinks is about all we shall need to send on ahead," said he. "We can make a *chukkur* round, and make him think we have come miles and leagues. About a mile along the Wuddo Mir road would do nicely, just through the pass and round the corner. . . . Lord! what a jest! Buster, you will be C.-in-C. some day, if everybody has their rights and you ain't hanged. . . . Couldn't we have just a tiny quiet little explosion too?"

"No, we couldn't. I believe it would make the

whole thing illegal. Besides, think of the anti-climax! You leave it to the imagination, my lad. Nobody can kid a man as much as he can kid himself, nor torture him either," replied Buster, showing himself thereby to be a psychologist.

"You are always right at times. Well, I'll send out the tent, and my Boy can go with it and take some toke and lotion. . . . We'd better take the cord and details on the oonts.[1] I'll send for Sōomar and arrange about those useful humming-birds. I'll also drill him and the others in their parts of walking-gentlemen and bloody-minded conspirators. . . . One thing—they can't *say* anything wrong, for not one of them knows or understands a word of English. I suppose we had better call for him, to come out to play, in a body."

"No," demurred Buster; "one of us had better 'stand by' at the tents and do the talking for the delegates. I think you had better undertake that. You see, it will be so much more enjoyable and dramatic and altogether more of a giddy cop if we can get him to unbosom himself of his pleasing doctrines on the very scene of his expiation. Bill Manners of the Twentieth and Snooty and I can be the deputation, in the first place, and we can also be the chosen band to conduct him to the secret meeting. Then you can hop out with the *shikari* and be the spokesman of that smelly band of conspirators. . . . Then we'll deal faithfully and fairly by him according to his own words—or pretend to."

"How long shall we give him here?"

"No time at all," said Buster. "We must get on to him at once, for various reasons. We don't want

[1] Camels.

him to have time to make a number of 'previous engagements,' nor do we want him making any trouble in this spot where everything is beautiful and only Claney would be vile, until he had corrupted the innocent and made them as vile as himself."

"When shall we start in then?"

"Go straight to the Railway Hotel directly he arrives, and barge in as soon as he has had time to wash, if he is given to that weakness."

"Suppose he brings a gang with him. They'd spot us right off, and put him up to it that he was being pulled. Lord, we mustn't foozle it."

"No," said Buster, "we mustn't foozle it. Because if we do, I shall have to go and simply beat him until he runs away. I am not going to have him here. He has got to go away at once, if I have to put him in a sack and wheel him away. But I don't think he will come with a gang. More likely they will pass him on to their pals here, and a deputation will wait on him an hour or so after his arrival."

"No, they'd meet him at the station and garland him," said Lieutenant Daly *alias* Jerks.

"Well, that would be all right. They'd drive him in state, in a station tonga, to the hotel round the corner, and then ask when they might have the honour of waiting on him after he had 'taken his food.' . . . And we'd nip in first. He wouldn't know us from them even if we *are* dressed as Pathans," replied Buster.

"There's a big element of risk of losing our fish if there is anybody with him, or waiting for him. No doubt they've supplied him with an 'interpreter' to look after him, and take care that he sees and hears the right people."

"Nothing venture, nothing have. It's worth it, even if the chances were less."

"Oh, we'll *venture* all right. Only it won't be as easy as it sounds."

"*I* know!" said Manners. "I'll get Luxman, the orderly I told you about. He is as smart as they make 'em, and as trustworthy as the Bank of England. Let him be decoy-duck and tackle him alone. He could probably diddle the genuine deputation if they are there already. If he can get him outside the town we can bring him to the place, by force, if he turns shy."

"Splendid!" cried Buster. "Let's re-arrange it like this then. . . . Let this chap Luxman and Jerks go boldly to the station and meet him there, and garland him and so on, if there is no opposition lot there first. . . . Jerks will have to go as a Hindu. . . . You can wear a *dhoti*,[1] Jerky. Then they can tell him that the Stark Staring Secret Central Inner Nine want him at an awful solemn and important meeting between themselves and some fearful delegates from the Council of Three and a Half or something, and that they have to meet, in these days of oppression and degradation, out in the wilderness. He'll swallow it whole. If there is a gang there already, Jerks and his spokesman'll have to wait upon occasion and buttonhole him when he is alone."

"Luxman'll pull it off all right," said Manners.

"Very well then," continued Buster. "We'll leave it at that, and as soon as Jerks comes and tells us the time fixed, we'll send word to Soomar, who'll have his *oonts* down by the market, and we can clear off in our Pathan kit, and a couple of the camels can go to the

[1] Loose apron-like nether garment.

hotel. Jerks can drive one, with Claney behind him, and Luxman can be druv by the *oont-wallah* on the other."

"We shan't know when to send the tent and grub out," said O'Rourke. "May as well make a comfortable picnic of it too."

"We'll have another *oont* and take the lot with us. No need for a servant. The *shikaris* will pitch the tent, and make a camp-fire and so on. Mustn't forget some spare tent-pegs to peg him out with."

"Right O, then! That's settled. Jerks gets a Hindu rig-out and I'll provide the deadly weapon of vengeance. Manners sends for this chap Luxman to astonish the real delegates, if sich be, and we'll have Soomar here for his instructions after dinner."

"We shall probably see in the papers to-morrow when he is to arrive here. Directly the great news appears, our Secret Society is to assemble in the Chummery for final arrangements," said Buster. "I told you how you all had unnamed, unfathomed yearnings that only a Secret Society could satisfy! Now you won't be pore down-trodden subalterns any longer. The good gentleman's Message of Uplift has come unto you, and you are—er—uplifted."

"We are," cried the uplifted ones with a single voice.

"Wait till you see him, though. When you've gazed upon his face and form you'll say so. . . . Time to change! Home, beery home, Snoots." And the Secret Society dispersed about its more lawful occasions.

CHAPTER XI

SAUCE FOR THE GANDER

THE three-fifteen Express slowed down into the station of Karabad, and babel, that would have appalled the original builders of the very ill-fated tower of that name, arose to the high-pitched glass roof with a pitch far higher. . . . Scores of coolies raced along beside the train, grabbing, through open windows, at bags, and, as it came to a standstill, swarming into the corridor and saloon carriages, blocking the narrow passages of the former very effectually, and diffusing an odour neither choice nor, in India, rare. Rich it perhaps may be called, powerful certainly. Being constitutionally and by training averse from the rich and powerful, William Tom Claney, Esquire, M.P. for Jewsditch, and late Local Guardian, did not like it at all. He felt the heat, and his secret beer did not agree with him in this beastly country; and so he violently kicked the shins of the head of the file that swooped down the narrow alley-way between the door of the carriage and that of his compartment. The smitten one howled and fell back, and Claney pressed his advantage and drove the stinking foreigners before him. He was delighted to see how basely they fled. "Teach you to mob a gentleman!" said he. "Now, fetch my dunnage, and stir yourselves."

Lor! What a row, and wasn't it just hot! He must have some beer somewhere—whether or no. . . . Hadn't they sent anybody to meet him, and where was the secretary and interpreter the committee had lent him and put at his disposal, free? . . . Didn't think he was going to find his way about the country

alone, and him not knowing the silly lingo, did they ? "

And then he saw a face he remembered to have seen before, at one of the special and private quiet little meetings, as two men came up to him and welcomed him with fervour, humility, and fulsome words such as his soul loved.

" Welcome to Karabad, Saviour of India and Friend of Poor and Oppressed Man," said one of them, in remarkably English English.

" Welcome, Protector of the Poor ! Welcome to our humble city, and shed the light of your countenance upon it and also Mellow Light of Reason ! " said the other, with a slight *chee-chee* accent.

And each threw over his head a heavy garland of tuberoses which assorted but ill with the black broadcloth, the paper collar, and the grey flannel shirt.

" Thank you kindly, my friends, and who might *you* be," replied Claney. " Members of the local committee, or what ? "

And the first speaker replied " *Hist !* " just as it is said upon the boards of the Royal Theatre, Drury Lane, London. . . . Having said " *Hist !* " most impressively, and repeated it, he looked around furtively and then laid his finger on his lips and generally conducted himself in a manner calculated by its extreme mysteriousness and secrecy to attract public attention. Approaching his wheat-coloured countenance near to that of the titillated Claney, he whispered hoarsely, " We are from the Secret Central Committee of the Sacred Seven. We are charged to conjure you by all you hold most dear, and by your love of India and of Us, to Come ! "

At the word " conjure " Claney winced visibly.

" To come where ? "

"To the meeting between them and the Inner Three from the North. . . . We will conduct you thither. . . . At what hour may we wait upon you at your hotel? . . . The Railway Hotel is the only decent one. . . . We will be there at five, by which time you will have rested and refreshed yourself. Fail us not, Lord of the Elephants and Father of the—er—Camels."

"Right you are, young feller!" replied Claney, "I'll help yer. That's what I came to Injer for."

"But—not a word to a soul," continued the young man in the red gold-edged turban, long white cotton coat, *dhoti*—a kind of apron gathered up, passed between the legs, and fastened in the rear for the graceful display of the socks or, very frequently, maidenly stockings of the wearer—and spring-side boots. "Not a word to a soul! Not even to your secretary, nor to any committee or delegation that may wait upon you, nor any living creature. We are the Secretest Secret Society in India, and," in a blood-curdling whisper, "our necks are all in halters already."

"What a shame and disgrace to the British flag!" replied Mr. Claney warmly. . . . "But you'll find a powerful friend in me. Cheer up! No, I won't mention the appointment to anybody."

"And you are engaged to us for this evening, whatever may occur, and whoever may wish to secure you for themselves?"

"Right you are! Yes! 'First come, first served.' . . . I'm yours from five. . . . You'll come an' conduc' me to your meeting at that hour, I understand?"

Luxman here murmured to Jerks in Hindustani, and the latter hurriedly thanked the Lord of the Ele-

phants and Father of the Camels, as he assured him that they would come for him at five.

As the secret and haltered ones faded unobtrusively into the crowd, another deputation hurried along the platform, peering into carriages and chattering shrilly.

It was headed by an enormously fat man picturesquely arrayed in a tiny turban, like a pink bowler hat, a tall collar, a black frock-coat, a *dhoti*, bare legs, and sandals. As he walked, an advance guard of corporation swayed from side to side. His neck was wider than his head, and he had the lips of a negro—nay of two negroes. In his hand he bore a huge bouquet of ill-bred roses and smelly marigolds, packed into a solid and heavy mass. As a projectile to project at a pi-dog it had its points. As a bunch of flowers it was a failure, and, to the æsthetic eye, an utter abomination.

With a sacramental air, the next man carried a rope of tuberoses which had seen better days—and those some time before. However, even that had its advantages, for the fat man, who was incalculably rich from the rents of the foulest slum property on God's earth, had thereby got it for the sum of two annas and nine pies, which is the equivalent of twopence three farthings, and would charge it unto the funds of the Society at one rupee, which, being interpreted, is one and fourpence.

"Here is he! Here is he!" screamed the young gentleman who had been told off at Bombay to keep Mr. Claney in the hollow of his hand between "committees," and who had slipped away to find and guide the deputation directly the train stopped.

"Honourable and Respectable Mister," said he, indicating the fat man, as the deputation clustered

round the Legislator, " allow me to present to you the learned light of this city, Honourable Mister Ramchandra Narayen Joshi, which has come to bid you Godspeed in Welcome and How Do. He is our President here and very good gentleman, and doing much work for the Cause. He expected C.I.E. or C.S.I. and did not even get beggarly Kaisar-i-Hind, and so can better imagine than describe. The rest are similar gentlemen and pay respects and revere and thanks awfully. They are jolly well glad to see you and hope you will do much for them."

The members of the deputation were then severally presented by name, and to each the Statesman presented the huge hand that he was wont, at fitting times and in fitting places, to describe as the " fist of a horny-handed son of toil."

Some of the gentlemen took it, and very curious was the contrast between the tiny delicate brown hands that had obviously never touched anything heavier than a pen, and the mass of red meat of the British " working-"man. Those who evaded it and the bother of purification essential after contact with anything so polluting, gave a quick ducking curtsey, the right hand on the stomach and the left touching the forehead.

All having been introduced, and Claney very anxious to go in search of beer and a quiet pipe " in his shirt-sleeves," the unwieldy President produced a sheet of paper, and, with his gold-spectacled eyes close to the same, began to read an address of welcome, couched in interesting English, and clothed in Oriental imagery.

But Claney lacked one attribute of the royal people he hated and affected to despise—patience.

Claney lacked many of their attributes. In fact,

we may say he lacked all. He had no self-control no faintest notion of *noblesse oblige*; no sympathy whatsoever, though it was a word never long absent from his lips; and, being a Fool, he could not suffer fools gladly, for the fool is even more intolerant of fools than is the strong, hard, clever man. Of the genuine inbred courtesy so often found in the working man—who works—Claney had no trace, and he was as thoroughly vulgar and coarse in grain as he was in appearance.

And although, in his heart of hearts, he knew these dangerous plotters to be frauds and liars, struggling to maintain a threatened social supremacy which was the most cruel and intolerant tyranny the world could show or had ever seen; although he knew they represented a tiny and hated oligarchy, as progressive, enlightened, and useful as the Holy Inquisition of old; although he knew them to be cunning, greedy, scoundrels and unspeakable cowards to boot, he was hardly justified in bawling in the middle of a flowing rounded period—"Oh! chuck it—do! . . . I've had enough. See? . . . You bring the rest of it round to my hotel in the morning. I want a drink and a sloosh."

One of the deputation, whose face might have served a great artist as subject for a picture of Hate Personified, spat elaborately, and turned away. The "secretary" hastened to explain that the Statesman was in need of beer and rest, and thanked them from the bottom of his soul, and that he earnestly hoped to see them in the morning. . . .

The President, greatly chagrined at having his eloquence curtailed, said that they had hoped he would address them and talk of many things that evening; but Claney informed him that he had already promised

to attend a meeting that night, a reply which sorely puzzled the deputation and added to the surprise already evoked by the sight of the garlands which had forestalled their own. Who on earth could be poaching on their preserves and getting at their own private and peculiar M.P.? . . . It was a mystery! . . . Who in Karabad would dare to work independently of themselves, much less in opposition? Could those Mohammedan swine . . . No, impossible! . . . Well, the secretary would have to keep his eyes and ears open. He wasn't paid to let this sort of thing occur. . . . All very well for him to say he had to slip out to bring up the deputation, and that the deputation shouldn't have been late. Here was the very thing happening that he was paid to prevent! . . . Well, he'd better pretty soon find out who was trying to get hold of the low-caste, upstart, vulgar coolie, or the "secretary" would find himself in search of employment, if nothing worse befell him. . . . And the deputation escorted their prey to the Railway Hotel and there left him with honeyed words which quickly turned to scathing comment and bitter abuse.

"Can the warmest admirer and most ardent boot-licker of these English deny that they are merely mad children?" asked one. "Look at this sweeper we have just left! An obvious coolie and a low-caste labourer, and, in England, a *Member of Council*, a Rajah! . . . Not by birth, mind you, and not by examination, and not by adoption of some Sirdar, but by the election of other coolies! . . . Think of it, brothers! They call upon the coolie-people to come and aid them in Council! . . . They have a king with a respectable ancestry of some fifteen hundred years; they have war-lords of the type of the Sirdars

Roberts and Kitchener; they have Lords of the Council of the type of the strong and accursed Viceroy whom they let be jockeyed by a dull fool; they have the greatest army of fighting ships in the world and an army of the strongest and fiercest human devils in the world; they have a great and wealthy aristocracy, and a country honeycombed with gold-mines; that their Gods are great and powerful none can deny; their sahib-caste consists of men that are men indeed, and mighty of hand and of brain—and they say unto their coolie-people, 'Oh, coolie-people! choose thee a ruler and he shall rule over us and our army and our navy and shall have more power than the King. Yea, he shall go about the world speaking Evil of his Nation and blackening the faces of his King and the King's viziers and diwans. He shall be a Lord, and we will give him money and honour, though he hate and beat us.' And the coolies rejoice and wax impudent and even themselves with men of caste and wealth and education, and have no respect for those who have passed examinations; for those who have wealth; for those who are in Government Service; nor for those who hold office. . . .

"Rather they laugh and choose this ordure, and he cometh from some mill or mine, and, without washing his hands, seizes upon Papers of State. Is it credible that grown men can be such fools?"

"They hold that all white men who pay taxes should be represented in the Durbar," said another.

"Yes! Said I not that they were mad and child-ish?"

"It is indeed as you say! . . . Fancy this gross, mannerless dog making laws for Sahibs! . . . And do not men of family, experience, and training know

better than coolies what is best *for* coolies, since they *must* be cherished?"

"Aye! 'Mad as a Sahib' is a true saying!"

"Well, to-morrow we will get this anointed pariah dog to commit himself as deeply as he will, and show him to the waverers as the delegate of the great Labour and Socialist parties, and the genius of what they call the Little England. . . . We can publish his speech as we have written it, after we have told him something of the subjects on which he is to touch."

"Yes. And Nathu shall interpret. He is cunning and bold beyond his years. I predict the day when Nathu will be induced to 'strike a blow.'"

And while his friends discussed him, the Statesman had a "sloosh," tea, and the desired pipe in the preferred shirt-sleeves.

. . . . . .

And, at the hour of five, there padded into the compound of the hotel, two bobbing, bubbling, superciliously-looking camels, which, upon their riders' cries of "*Ussher baba, ussher,*" reluctantly knelt upon the ground for their debarkation.

"I can't ride a horse, let alone a camel," said the Statesman, on realizing that it was proposed to take him to the secret meeting by this novel mode of transport.

"You've no need to *ride*," said the Hindu delegate. "You just sit there as comfortably as in an arm-chair, and I drive you. Pleasantest thing out. You'll think you are on a switchback, or on the summer sea at Brighton. Swing your leg over here, and when he gets up just catch hold here. You'll enjoy it like anything."

Mr. Claney, paling a little, clumsily straddled the

rear seat of the huge camel-saddle, and paled a little more as the camel uttered a gurgling, grumbling grunt which rumbled menacingly, and went well with the wild eye and bared teeth of the "humming-bird." At school Claney had learnt a little recitation beginning

> Camel, thou art meek and mild,
> Docile as a little child,

and he privately decided that this was not the one. Many people with a wide experience of camels are still looking for it, in fact.

Jerks stood with one foot on the near upper fore-leg of the camel to prevent its rising before the Statesman had settled himself as comfortably in the saddle as his tightish white flannel trousers would allow. Then, after shouting "Hold tight," he vaulted into the front seat with a cry of "*Hulya baba, hulya.*"

Claney was thrown forward on to him, and clasped him round the neck, as the camel stood upright as to its hind legs, while keeping both its fore knees on the ground. As the fore-legs unfolded and the body resumed a horizontal position, he released his victim. But he was very unhappy. The camel caused his body to swing and jerk in such a way that he knew his backbone must be continually describing a kind of figure-of-eight. And he felt it unseemly that his bare legs should show between the flannel trousers and the black button-boots over which the grey woollen socks drooped like wilted flowers. Besides, the beastly thing might trip and fall. Think of the terrible distance one was above the ground!

"Do camels ever fall?" he enquired of his driver.

"It's their worst and commonest fault," replied Jerks, "next to going mad and bashing you against walls. They're very fond of biting off your knee-cap

too. Awful carnivorous brutes. There's a wild one where we're going, turned man-eater. Yes, they're *always* falling. Do it on purpose, I believe. But one isn't always killed, y'know. Generally only a leg or two. . . . Last fall I had, I got double compound fracture of both thighs, just where the tibulum joins the fibulum, or is it where the ulna joins the radium? Anyhow, treble pneumonia set in, and I was on my back a fortnight, I assure you."

"This one seems sure-footed," said Claney, in a thin voice.

"That's the worst of the crafty brutes! This one is known as 'Dividends' because he's always falling. Loves to do it just as one is crossing a single-plank bridge over a thousand foot nullah. . . . Wouldn't think it to look at him, would you?"

Mr. Claney felt a little unwell and meditated return. He said so.

"My dear sir! You don't want my death at your door and my blood on your head, do you? Why, if I turned up without you, the Nine would strike me dead. So would the Seven. Every one of 'em."

"Your English is very fluent," said Mr. Claney suspiciously. "It's near as good as my own."

"I shall remember that compliment and repay it anon," was the answer. "English! Why I've lived in England for years."

"And *Geneva*?" asked Claney, with emphasis and meaning.

"Oh, yes, I have been in Geneva."

"Ah, they're an active committee if you like! Were you in touch with—*you know*—from Russia?"

"Well, not as much as I should like to be. Some friends of mine hope to go there with me before very

long and get into extremely close 'touch' with him. We hope to get him to attend a meeting such as you are coming to now."

"That's right. He's what I call a whole-hogger."

The party had, by this time, reached the outskirts of the town and were traversing a long avenue of coco-nut palms, on either side of which lay cultivated fields. The musical droning of Persian-wheels filled the air, as the patient bullocks went round and round their endless rut, turning the great pot-laden wheel which poured a pint into the water-runnel for every gallon of water it brought up from the canal. At some wells, a pair of bullocks went backwards up an incline to the walled mouth and, returning, drew up the water-laden skin of a departed brother, which, on reaching the edge, spilt its precious contents into a trough and descended again for more as the cattle backed once again to the starting-point. Upon each journey the driver howled as one in agony, and brandished a heavy stick which never fell.

"Well, I never saw a bag o' water before," said the Legislator.

At other wells, little knots of women stood with shining brass and copper water-vessels on their heads, and awaited their turn at the rope.

The Indian woman can dress in brilliant blue, emerald green, and vermilion with a touch of pink and crimson, and give no shock to the eye, such as her sister of Whitechapel knows so well how to administer. Wedded to a man who never in the whole of his life earned more than £10 a year, she is a dignified, stately, cleanly, careful housewife, and, in most ways, a much more admirable person than the said sister, although neither

she nor her ancestresses ever set foot in a school, nor is she likely to see her great-granddaughters do so. Perhaps hers is the very hardest lot of any upon this earth, and perhaps she is the most patient and uncomplaining of women. To see her, and to know what her life is, lends interest and point to the newspaper accounts of young ladies and other ladies stricken with grief at the loss of their thousand-pound pearl necklaces or their jewel cases, poor souls. . . . How happy should the Indian peasant woman be that such sorrows cannot overtake her.

But she has other little troubles which cannot be helped.

No missionary can help her, no official, no "agitator," and no money. The thing is and will be. She numbers millions, and, upon a slight movement of the margin of cultivation, she starves to death in thousands, having first seen the children so starve, for they are weaker than she.

Claney and his kind blame the Government (which, during famine time, works itself and its servants to death), and holds it responsible for late or scanty monsoons, for native fatalism, for native physique, and for the native's playful habit of endeavouring to support ten children before he has enough to support their mother, with to-morrow's food in hand. If he and his kind spent one year in honest investigation they would see what absurd folly they talk—assuming they had the intelligence to see anything.

No, if you must blame somebody, blame God if you have the courage, and, if you haven't, do anything that may lie in your power to prevent the Herculean and Ixionic labours of the Government from being hampered and thwarted by the Claneys who devote

their time and evil energies to making the hardest task in the world a little harder, and in endeavouring to turn the people whom they make the hoardings of their own advertisement against their best friends and their only possible protectors from oppression. . . .

And meantime, the wandering Legislator, Mr. Claney, M.P., Saviour of India, jogs upon his way, going with alacrity and unction to a meeting, as he thinks, of half-mad desperadoes who would plunge a continent in blood and effect that little fluctuation of the margin of cultivation—because they are out of employment, and unfit for employment; or because they belong to the class that for centuries has oppressed and robbed, with every circumstance of insult and contumely, these millions who, for the first time in centuries, know that each "may reap where he has sown," and that these Peace of the Sircar is Peace indeed, in which the wolf lies down with lamb—outside him. . . .

Soon a dry river-bed ends the road, and Karabad is behind the wayfarers—and the open desert before. In the river-bed hundreds of coolies are shovelling sand into baskets which are slung pannier-wise upon scores of tiny donkeys.

"What are they doin' that for?" enquired the intelligent, but incredibly ignorant, visitor.

"Oh, that's sand for the wheat and sugar market, you know. . . . The Government has a monopoly of the sugar and wheat export here, and the only profit left to the growers is the sand. . . . You see Government buys it at Government's own price, and, by the time the unfortunate grower has squared a few Commissioners and the Governor, the only chance to make a living wage is to sell Government a few tons of sand

—*its own sand*! ha! ha!—at so much a pound, in the sugar and wheat. . . . But the dreadful thing is that when the river comes down, in the rains, it washes a lot of bodies out of that Mohammedan cemetery on the other bank, and the sand is, of course, half cholera microbes now. . . . I assure you that if we got down, I could find you a dozen of them in no time!"

"Let's hurry," said the Legislator, and, after a moment's shuddering silence, "Isn't it fair *aw*ful?"

"'Orrible!" said Jerks.

"Never take sugar in India," continued he, "it's the cause of all the cholera that isn't caused by bread. Some acclimatized people eat bread, but it's awfully risky in these parts. . . . Have you had enteric?"

"No fears! Why should I?"

"No, of course—you haven't been here long enough. You will, though! Ninety-nine decimal ninety-three and a half per cent of the cases die here. . . . It's the water. . . . Better live on beer. . . . That comes from China, and the local Government can't adulterate it. . . . Been vaccinated lately?"

"No, not since I was a nipper."

"By Giblets! you're a brave man."

"I am. . . . But why do you say so?"

"Why! to come here without being vaccinated! . . It's tempting Providence! . . . The bazaars here are full of smallpox. . . . Dying like flies! . . . You take my tip, and go and get vaccinated to-morrow. . . . Then go to another doctor and be inoculated in the other arm against enteric. . . . You've been inoculated against Plague, of course?"

"No! . . . Ought I?"

"Well, I've *heard* of people omitting the precaution

and surviving, but you take my tip, and go on to a third doctor, and be inoculated in the left leg for Plague."

"Good Gracious!"

"Yes! if you go seeking sorrow you'll find it in this country, and yours is a valuable life to the Empire, you know. Had malarial fever yet?"

"No! Nor don't want."

"No, I should think not. . . . It makes an awful wreck of the strongest. . . . Never the same again. . . . Just one little bite from the mosquito, and you are physically ruined for life. . . . Horrible!"

"I say, you're making me a bit nervous like."

"Oh, I only want to warn you, of course. Your other friends will say nothing to you of all this, for fear of driving you from the country. But I can see you are not the sort to be put off by trifles. Just you take proper precautions and hope for the best. . . . Hold on tight going down here, this is where he often falls. . . . And be careful going through the graveyard; there's no path, and he may trip over the tombstones. . . . It's one of the nastiest places for falling that I know."

"How can *I* be careful? It's *you* gotter be careful! You're driving the swine, not me!"

"I mean, be careful when you fall, and try not to come on your head. It's a splendid tip to fall limp and relaxed. If you fall stiff, you break major bones; but if you come down loose and limp, you only break minor bones and injure internal organs. . . . I'd rather do in a little bone and an organ, any day, than a big bone, wouldn't you?"

"I'd rather do none of 'em."

"Naturally—we'll hope for the best. 'Hope springs

infernal in the human beast,' as the poet says. Wonder which poet that was, now?"

"Dunno. . . . Look at that woman! . . . What a silly old fool! These blooming heathen surprise you, don't they?" . . .

Beside a newly made grave, probably a foot or so deep, knelt the "old" Mohammedan woman. She was of the lower classes, and some forty years of age. With streaming hair and streaming eyes she rent her clothing, beat her breast, and shrieked aloud to Allah to give her back her child. . . . Had God so little, and had she so much? Was *this* the loving fatherly kindness of the Father of the Faithful to one of the most faithful? . . . Were there no children of accursed unbelievers that her child must be taken? . . What had she done? . . . What had the child done that it should lie beneath the earth? . . . Why should dirt fill the eyes that were once so bright, and that yesterday had smiled on her? . . . Why should dirt lie on the lips that but yesterday had kissed her? And, turning with a piercing scream from the unanswering heavens, she flung herself full length upon the little grave and shrieked to its occupant to arise. . . As the camel passed, she ground her distorted face into the earth that covered her child, and hugged the little elongated mound. "*Mother is here,*" she shouted. "*Fear not the dark.*"

"Silly old fool!" repeated Claney, and the restraint that Jerks put upon himself, to keep his tongue and hands from the man, was strong.

The scenery soon became one uniform brown of earth, relieved by the olive-green of scattered cactus bushes, and one uniform blue of sky, save where the sun sank redly in the west. In front a barren range of

rocky hills broke the monotonous level of the horizon.

The leading camel bore to the right and led the way along the base of the hills. A jackal got up out of a nullah and sneaked off at a slow-looking lope that took him over the ground at an unexpected rate.

"Lor! what's that?" said Mr. Claney.

"Wolf," replied Jerks. "Hope he don't bring the pack down on us. Regular scourge in these parts. Awfully fond of camel-flesh as well as human. Follow a man on a camel for days. Get him in the end when he's asleep."

"Look here," said Claney, "I shan't come on any more of these expeditions."

"I don't think you will," replied the driver.

Presently a narrow opening appeared in the mountain wall, and a kind of goat-path appeared, leading up to it. This track the camels took, and, emerging from the pass, bore somewhat to the left. They took the left one of two paths a little later, and the opposite side of the hills was now upon the left of the party, and Mr. Claney was unconsciously approaching the town which he had recently quitted.

"How much farther?" he enquired.

"The scene of the conference is just round the corner of that spur that runs out into the plain," replied Jerks, pointing to the place, a couple of miles ahead.

Rounding this point, a quarter of an hour later, the travellers beheld a tent, a camp-fire, and some seven or eight rather wild-looking men. These wore turbans of white, blue, or red cotton encircling conical caps, fluted and woven with gold thread, and hanging down the wearers' backs; long cotton coats under gaily embroidered waistcoats; very voluminous blue or white cotton trousers, drawn in at the ankle, and shoes,

turned up at the toes like old-fashioned skates. Three of these men were very fair, as many Pathans are, and were decidedly cleaner than the rest.

With much grunting, gurgling, bubbling, and snarling protest, the camels knelt to the repeated commands of "*Ussher baba, ussher,*" and they repeated these protests when made to rise and go over to where a group of other camels knelt in a ring and sniffed superior.

"Allow me to present to you the famous and distinguished publicist, statesman, legislator, and imperial ruler who has come to India on purpose to bring a Message of encouragement and advice to us, and to all the oppressed and down-trodden people who groan beneath the iron heel of tyranny, and—er—think as we do. Behold Lord Sir Claney, Bart.," said Jerks, by way of introduction.

The three fair and grey-eyed Pathans bowed like the three musketeers, while Messrs. Soomar, Bardul, Chattur, and Ali Khan, *shikaris* all, grinned sheepishly and said "Salaam Sahib," although previously informed that the expected person was not a Sahib at all, but a felon masquerading as one.

"Will your honour come to the council fire and be seated?" said Buster through his false beard. "And, before we disclose any plans and give any information, will you answer one or two questions? We shall then know how to act, and can either escort you back to Karabad and try something else—or—carry on."

"Cert'nly," said Mr. Claney, a little puzzled. He had heard something about Pathans. How well they spoke English, and just with the accent and intonation of the hated "snobs." He seemed to know the voice too.

"Well, do you, or do you not, recommend violence?" Do you, or do you not, recommend the formation of secret societies for the furtherance of what is called 'political crime'? And is it true that you advise those who cannot find an agent willing to murder a Sahib—I mean a tyrant—to try to find one willing to go to gaol for attempting physical injury of a nature calculated, not to kill, but to incapacitate permanently?"

Thereupon Claney mounted his hobby.

"We're all friends and patriots here," said he, "and I'll tell you plainly what I recommend and have recommended all along. First of all, *unite*. Union is strength—'specially Trade Union. Unite, combine, band together, associate, join hand to hand and heart to heart, and have a secret society in every town and village. . . . Then *do* something. . . . Something you *have* done and the eyes of all the world have been turned to your wrongs. . . . Be no longer slaves. . . . Strike! Strike tyrants, if you ain't working-men, and so can't strike in the ordinary meaning of the word. . . . Strike a blow for freedom and for yourselves. . . . Why should any blooming snob rule over men like you, just because he's passed an examination, after being an overgrown schoolboy when his betters were working hard by the sweat of their brow? . . . Why! Aren't *you* as good as he is? . . . Some of you can speak English prime, and are almost like gentlemen in your way, for all you're blacks and natives." . . . And so on.

Soomar yawned and Chattur opined that this was a Mullah or a woman.

"Then you *do* advise murder, do you?" asked Snooty.

"Didn't I say *strike tyrants*. . . . If they don't like it let them clear out and leave the country to be ruled by its own parliament. . . . You wait and watch Ireland awhile—and you'll see something! . . . If they kill one of you they call it an 'execution,' but if you kill one of them they call it a *murder*. . . . Were all the people in History that rose against tyrants, *murderers*? . . . What about Magner Carter and all that sort of thing? D'you reckon if you say politely to a tyrant, 'Please, Mister, you chuck it,' he's *goin'* to chuck it? . . . You gotter chuck *him*. . . . You can argue and they can argue, but the best and loudest argument is the *bomb*. There is no back-answering to *that*. . . ."

"And suppose no instrument is forthcoming and the local secret society that has decreed the death of a 'tyrant' cannot find an executioner to carry out their decree, what is to be done? . . . It is not every patriot who is willing to give his life for his country, and, as you of course know, *we* don't go into patriotism to lose, either life or anything else."

Claney leered.

"Well, if you can't get hold of one of these half-starved and three-quarters-balmy students to earn a patriot's fame and a hero's grave, you are a poor lot! . . . Youngsters with what they call 'ideals,' are the right stuff for the jobs *you* want to do. . . . What price a bomb and a 'patriot' student for each British official? . . . You could clear the whole lot off in a day. . . . You just watch them in Ireland when the time comes. . . . They're going to be *free* —and so could you be. . . . *Bomb's* the word, I tell you! . . .

. . . . . .

"I think we have heard enough, you fellows," said Buster.

"Yes, the stinker!" said Manners.

"*Ex*pound," said Jerks.

"Well, look here, my man." began Buster.

"Who are you talking to?" interposed the astonished and offended Statesman.

"Silence! Hold your beastly tongue and listen to me. We *have* formed a Secret Society as you so strongly recommend, and we adopt your teaching as to the righteousness and expediency of political violence. But we have the courage of our convictions, which you and your crawling scum who hunt for 'half-starved and three-quarters-balmy students' have not. . . . We kill our victims *ourselves*, and we are about to remove from our path a specimen of the vermin against which we are banded."

Several times had Claney essayed to interrupt, but had quailed before the frown of his interlocutor. He now jerked out, "And who's *he*?"

"He is an enemy of the country we are sworn to protect. We are the Society of the Friends of India and he is her enemy, and the friend of her enemies. He advocates the murder of those who are giving their whole lives to her service, and who, when they do not succumb to disease, climate and overwork, leave her service *poor*. He is an inciter to murder, maiming, and lawlessness—and a cowardly brutal knave. He is about to die in the manner he advocates for others—who do good as strenuously as he does evil. His name is—*Claney*."

Buster had been watching with some interest to see how the advocate of murder would take his own death-sentence, and hoped, for the credit of his race,

he would at least display the courage of the trapped rat, and, springing to his feet, "go" for somebody. But Claney, who had been growing paler and paler, until his nose, brilliant with the combined influences of indigestion and beer, glowed in his white face like a holly-berry on a snow-patch, gave a queer little groan and collapsed limply upon himself, as he heard his name. His pipe fell from his nerveless hand, and he seemed to be about to faint. . . .

"What is the sentence of the court upon the mischievous and dangerous tyrant, Claney?" asked Buster; and Snooty, Manners, Jerks, and the orderly, raising their right hands, solemnly said "*Death*," while the worthy Soomar, Bardul, Chattur, and Ali Khan, imitating them, ejaculated "*Debt*" as one man.

"In the midst of life we are in debt," murmured Jerks, truthfully so far as he himself was concerned.

"What about getting '*some half-starved and three-quarters balmy students*' though? It saves one from the fear of the gallows," remarked Snooty.

"Yes," said Manners, "but as we don't utilize the services of the aforementioned half-starved and three-quarters-balmy students, I propose we blind him and cut off his hands."

A shudder shook the body of Mr. Claney.

"Or we might tie him up here for the night, and if, in the morning when we come on horseback, with sword and lance, we find that neither the man-eating camel nor the wolves have got him, we might use him for tent-pegging, lemon cutting, and Turk's Head," suggested Jerks.

"No," said Buster, "he has pronounced his *own* doom. Let me repeat it. '*What price a bomb for*

each British official? . . . Bomb's the word I tell you.' Peg him out by that tree, and bring the bomb."

Claney seemed to be comatose from sheer terror. As the Englishmen seized him, he uttered a scream that seemed likely to be audible in Karabad, and thereafter pattered prayers, blasphemies, and entreaties. Finding his captors immovable, he offered large sums of money, and other inducements, and finally swore he would leave the country as quickly as train and ship could carry him, and never mention its name again, if he might go free with the loss of all he possessed. But the time had not quite come to accept the offer of speedy departure. The subalterns had heard his proposals for the destruction of their friends, for the seducing of their troopers, and for general sedition, mutiny and murder.

The moaning wretch was carried to a tree which was out of sight of the tent, and, with hands bound behind him, and feet lashed to tent-pegs a yard apart, was seated against it and tied to its trunk. Buster then approached him, carrying a cube-shaped tin box from which came the ominous and loud ticking of an infernal machine—or a three-rupee alarum clock.

"This is a bomb," said he. "I understand you to appreciate the *argumentum ad bombum*. It is timed to go off at a moment, which I need not specify, between now and to-morrow morning. It is a nice bomb, and you'll be a nice mess. But the jackals will clear you up and tell no tales. By the time you are licked up, and gnawed up, and generally cleaned up, we shall be hundreds of miles away, attending to some of your friends and fellow-conspirators. I don't think anyone will come this way for some months. Not till the summer, in fact. So you won't be rescued" . . .

and Buster placed the "bomb" between the outstretched legs of Claney who moaned feebly.

Buster joined the others at the tent out of sight of Claney.

"I can't stand it for long, you fellows," said he. "In fact, I'd have chucked it, only I believe it is the only way to scare him out of the country. We must let him up in a few minutes or he'll die of sheer funk, I believe. He's half crazy now. Don't want to make a lunatic of him, cowardly brute though he is. Serve him right to leave him all night."

"Let's have a drink," said Snooty.

"Not till we have let him go," said Buster. "Not me at least. Afterwards I want nine large brandies before drinking any whisky. Oh, come and let the brute go, I can't stick it."

They approached Claney who, in five minutes, had died a hundred coward deaths and was a distressing spectacle.

"Here! Claney!" shouted Buster, running towards him. "We're going to let you off—on conditions."

Claney writhed, screaming, "Lemme go! Take it away! Take it away! Help! Help! Take it away. It's going *OFF*! Help! . . ."

Buster snatched it up. "Claney!" he shouted, "you're saved! Look!" and he ran with the innocent cigar box and three-rupee alarum back to the tent, and then returned.

Claney breathed as though he had been two minutes under water, and then whimpered, "Brandy!"

Jerks fled to the tent and quickly returned with a pint tumbler of brandy and soda, which the wretch drained at a draught and held out for more.

"What are you goin' to do with me now?" he asked. "Lemme go, gennlemen, lemme go. I never did *you* any harm. I'll do just what you tell me, an' kindly welcome."

"We're going to set you absolutely free—on conditions," said Buster. "We let you go now. But, if you are in India a fortnight hence we kill you in such a way as you'll never forget, and you shall live at the bottom of a well for a month first. You shall swear upon the Bible never to mention the name of India again, as well as to take no steps to find out who we are."

"I swear! I'll swear *any*thing!" said Claney fervently.

"I've no doubt you will, but don't you forget that we are all-powerful and ubiquitous, and that you will be watched day and night in India, on the sea, and in Europe. You cannot deceive us nor escape us. So *Beware*."

"I'm done with it, Mister! I've had enough!"

"I believe you have—for the moment. What are your present fixtures in the way of engagements?"

"I was booked to address a public meetin' and two private meetin's here, and same at Husseinabad, and speak to the mill-hands too. And I said I'd visit the High School."

"Well, you'll cancel all those. You can go to the school, though, on your way back to Bombay. It'll do you good. Also you can there publicly recant, before newspaper reporters. Mr. Harris will see you do no harm, anyhow. You'll tell your friends here what has happened, and you'll go to Husseinabad on purpose to tell the gang there. And you'll say that we are a far stronger and more violent society than

they, and it is our purpose to murder every disturber of the peace of India. Our next move will be the throwing of a bomb *into the middle of an anarchist meeting*. You might mention the fact, too, that we have a spy in every one of their committees. We have had one at each of yours. Perhaps you recognize —er—Herr Pundit Babu Chatterbosh," he concluded, indicating the faithful Luxman.

"I've seen him before," he admitted.

"And, more," he resumed, "you will write a letter, which I will now dictate, to that wretched rag you represent, and state that you are bitterly ashamed of what you have started out to do, and another to the 'Times,' saying that you have done so, as your own rag will probably refuse to publish it."

"Here! no! that's *too* thick," said Claney. "I shall be the laughing stock o' the country."

"You will that," replied Buster, "or you'll be a corpse! Here, Chatterbosh, bring me back the bomb while we tie the prisoner up again."

A shout from Claney, and a torrent of promises to do *anything*, stayed further coercive proceedings.

"I don't suppose you'll be in a condition to write for some hours to come," said Buster, "so, as the two letters are fairly long and exhaustive, you can sign our draft. But, mind you, my friend, if you, at any time, in any way repudiate them, we'll *visit* you, yes, in the wilds of Jewsditch!"

Buster then produced two letters and read them over to the wilted Statesman. The first ran as follows.—

"To the Editor of the 'Daily Views.'

"Sir,

"I beg to inform you that I find myself unable to fulfil my undertaking, and to send you more of the series of letters descriptive of the terrible condition of India due to mismanagement and misrule. In point of fact, India was never so prosperous as she is now, and there is *no* misrule. I am filled with admiration for both the methods, and the men responsible for the state of affairs, and only wish I could spend a year or two here, so as to be able to understand something of the great and knotty problems that the Government of India and the local Governments are striving so loyally and courageously to solve. The individual who endeavours in any way to hamper the work that is being done by them, should be put in gaol as a felon, or in an asylum as a lunatic. The scales have fallen from my eyes, and you must find some other rascal or madman. I very deeply and bitterly regret that my name must go down to posterity among those of the men who went to India to make the incredibly difficult work of my countrymen more difficult and dangerous, and among those of the fools who thought that in a few days they could give Hints on Government to specialists here of thirty years' anxious experience. I beg of you to publish this letter with any comments you like. I am sending a copy to *The Times*.

"I am, Sir,

"Yours, etc.,

"William Tom Claney,

"*M.P. for Jewsditch.*"

The second letter fetched an even deeper groan from the Member :—

"To the Editor of 'The Times,' London.

"Sir,

"I earnestly beg of you to publish the following letter and copy of my letter sent by the same mail to the Editor of the *Daily Views*. I came to India to cause as much trouble as I could and to do all the mischief in my power—as others have done before me. I agreed to send a number of letters to the *Daily Views*, describing all the evil I could see or hear of. I was also prepared to let the Government of India know how India should be governed as soon as I had set foot in the country. As I am most bitterly ashamed of my criminal folly, I beg that you will find room for this and the attached letter, which I fear the *Daily Views* will not print. My signature is easily verified if you doubt the genuineness of this letter.

"I am, Sir,

"Yours, etc.,

"William Tom Claney,

"*M.P. for Jewsditch.*"

It was a bitter draught indeed, but the bomb still ticked in Luxman's hand, and the Legislator was a broken man.

"Now, understand clearly, and, for your own sake, make no mistake," said Buster. "Send your kit on *at once* to Bombay, but get out yourself at Husseinabad and tell the plotters there exactly what has happened to you, *and what will happen to them*, and make it clear that our releasing you is our first and last act of

mercy. Write and fix things to night. Then you get out of India just as fast as you can go, and don't ever speak of India again. You are not to hold another meeting again, public or private, but you will go to the Husseinabad High School and address the boys, provided the Principal is present. You will there give us proof of your repentance by repudiating all you have said hitherto! We shall know every word you utter there and elsewhere, so be *very* careful, and distrust your own brother if you have one. These letters will be posted to-night by me. Sign them in your usual manner. Here's a fountain pen—and don't forget that the penalty for repudiation is just *Death*, painful and slow."

Much swearing on a Bible then followed.

The *shikaris* were privately instructed to escort Mr. Claney to Karabad and put him on the high road beyond the river bed, and leave him to ask his way to the hotel what time they departed to their village across the border. They were to set out with him an hour after the departure of the Sahibs, and take the longer route. Two of them would accompany the latter gentlemen and bring the tent, and they would take charge of the camels when those useful animals had served their purpose.

That night the Chummery resounded with song, jest, and laughter, and to four young men three bottles of golden wine seemed insufficient unto the day. Aloys received a letter at dinner time which ran as follows :—

"DEAR MRS. Burgoyne,

"Claney! He fell among thieves and the thieves sprang up and choked him—off. He'll do no more

mischief, and will be out of India in a few days. And he is absolutely unhurt. We reasoned with him.

"Please give my salaams to the Junior Curlton and love to the President.

"Your devoted
"B. B."

CHAPTER XII

"LIKE DRIFTWOOD SPARS"

BALU DHONDU, like a certain famous grasshopper, was "sitting on a railroad track," and, though not "picking of his teeth with a carpet-tack," was busily cleaning and polishing them with a twig of the *neem* tree. Although, during business hours, he only wore a coat of grease or rather a complete suit of grease and, when off duty, a dirty rag, he was particular about his teeth.

He was now wearing the complete suit of grease because he was engaged by professional concerns and waiting for a train—the latter fact being a corollary, for Balu Dhondu was a train-robber. Not one of your objectionable, swaggering train-robbers who "hold up" trains and waste time, but one of the most modest and unobtrusive. Far be it from him to stop any man, much less a train, and the last conduct of which he desired to be guilty was conduct calculated to cause a breach of the peace. Indeed it was with a view to speedy departure from the scene of any sort of disturbance or strife that Balu went to the trouble of greasing his body from head to foot, and shaving the hair from his head. It would be a remarkably skilful person indeed who, without the use of

firearms, could persuade Balu to remain where he did not desire to remain.

Balu Dhondu's career had been varied and is very interesting and instructive to its student. His parents had lived by theft and had taught him all they knew of their profession, which was not a little, for they were themselves the children of professional thieves. In fact Balu was the heir of all the ages of a criminal tribe whose sole visible means of support was stealing. Such tribes exist in India, and their profession is crime because they belong to the stealing caste, just as more fortunate or less fortunate folk belong to the coppersmith caste or the *bunnia* caste or the shoemaker caste or the sweeper caste or the *syce* caste. A man must follow the ancestral trade and be of the ancestral caste surely? A bear is born a bear and a peacock a peacock. What would you? Shall the crow bemoan that he was not born a parrot and try to enter the parrot caste?

But special advantages had been vouchsafed by Our Lady of Thieves unto Balu Dhondu, and he was greater than any of his forbears or caste-fellows. Indeed he meditated retiring from business and settling down by the ancestral Ghats, with at least four wives to work for him, and two-score buffaloes to give him milk and increase his honour and importance. For he had enjoyed the blessings of a brief but invaluable missionary education and knew many things hidden from his brethren, and enjoyed a wider outlook upon life. He could imagine, plan, dare, and organize. Thus he rose in life from the comparatively humble ranks of the pilferers to be a substantial and respected train-robber, the pattern and admiration of the young men of the community he both ruled and adorned.

The great famine was the evil out of which came the good of his missionary education, but the noble and great-hearted people who saved the tiny orphan skeleton could not keep him long enough to do more than increase his potentialities for evil. Book-learning gave no sort of desire for virtue, nor strengthened for good the attenuated will that never once rose to combat an impulse. By the time he fled from the Mission, knowledge of means was added to an undiminished instinct and aptitude, and Balu was a far more capable and dangerous thief than he would have been if sheer starvation had never driven his dying parents out of their jungle fastnesses to the Mission. He knew the ways of men and cities, and particularly of *terains*, for the Mission station was near the *rêlwêy* and the fire-carriages passed the bottom of the compound. Seated on the bank within a yard or so of the trains, Balu had noted many things. Among them was the fact that the god of the thieves had assuredly been watching over his own when the first-class carriages were designed. For a person in the lavatory could bolt the door against a person in the other part of the compartment, whereas the other could not fasten the door against one in the lavatory. Moreover, the only clothes-hooks in the compartment were fastened one on each side of the lavatory door, and a person in the lavatory could very easily and unobtrusively open the door—inwards it opened—stretch forth a hand, and gather unto him all the clothing of the sleeper or sleepers in the rest of the compartment. He could then shut and bolt the door, before sitting him down in most perfect safety and solitude, to go through the pockets of the garments, to remove links and studs, and to decide which of the

garments were sufficiently suited to his purpose to be worth removal. At his leisure, and after enjoying a ride, he could leave the lavatory as he entered it —by the window which was almost invariably open, and which, if shut, could doubtless be opened by one who was the descendant of a hundred generations of professional thieves.

The door arrangements had struck his observant eye as a mail-train once stood still before the bank on which he squatted.

But how to get on to the train? Money was required for a *tickkut*, even to a place a mile away. Besides, the Sahibs did not use the *terains* that crawled into the station and out again, nor did these *terains* have the big first-class carriages with the four beds in them and the door at the end that led into the so nicely arranged lavatory—positively perfect as a head-quarters, hiding-place, cover, and safe sanctuary for a thief, who could get everything without even entering the compartment itself.

How to get into the great, rushing, mail-trains that did not stop at the station but only slowed down as they passed through? . . . Slowed down! . . . Could not an active boy leap on to one as it went by the platform? Perhaps—but not without being seen—and that would mean a term in the Reformatory School. Better death or inglorious honesty than that awful monotony.

Slowed down! What about the Ghats? Surely the *terain* could not keep up its terrific rush when it reached the mountains? Balu bided his time—and it came.

One day, in the Geography lesson, the teacher spoke of mountains and man's debt to them as rain bringers,

watersheds, and barriers against invasion. Also, of man's skill in tunnelling them and crossing them with, roads and railways. He then referred to the Ghats not fifty miles away, and the daily passing trains that climbed them, by help of an extra engine, at a slow crawl. Slower than the mail trains passed through the station here? asked Balu. . . . Slower? . . . Why, in places they could go no faster than an active man could walk. That reply settled the matter, and Balu's career. There is a tide in the affairs of men! Given a slow-moving train that one could board in the dark; open windows of a lavatory, the door of which could not be shut against you; the clothes of a sleeper, hanging on pegs within reach of your hand as you lurked in the lavatory; a door that you could bolt against interference—and why remain at a Mission School, however well you might be fed and treated?

Having made certain arrangements, including a treaty with a gentleman who in England would be termed a "fence," Balu disappeared from the Mission School with an involuntary monetary contribution from the authorities, which carried him near to the Ghats and a part of the railway to which he had come to take up a pleasant and remunerative post, and which he justifiably hoped to fill with distinction and success until the time came to retire, full of years and profit.

Balu's very first essay succeeded beyond his wildest hopes, though he was then too inexperienced to do himself full justice. It was a dark, rainy night, and he lurked behind a bush until the train, puffing distressfully fore and aft, and progressing laboriously, drew up from the plains to the point, high up the mountain side, where Balu crouched.

As the train passed, Balu waited for the white-painted first-class carriages and, as the leading one drew level with him, seized the upper foot-board and stepped on to the lower.

The train entered the mile-long tunnel. The first carriage proved to be empty and Balu used it for experimental purposes. Entering the open window of the lavatory-part of the carriage, he noiselessly opened the door, and without entering the compartment, felt for the clothes hooks. Yes, they were within easy reach. Withdrawing his hand, he bolted himself into the lavatory, making no sound and learning the position of the bolt and the method of manipulating the sliding catch. Then he quitted the lavatory by way of the window, and walked along the lower foot-board, ready to drop off if necessary, and below the line of vision of any wakeful person in the next compartment. Arrived thereat, he very slowly and cautiously took a peep, and—joy—beheld two Sahibs asleep on the two long, broad seats running parallel with the long sides of the carriage. The two upper berths were empty and turned up flat against the side of the compartment. Unfortunately these two Sahibs were more or less wary birds, for their watches and small change lay by their heads on a little shelf.

However, there were their clothes on the hooks beside the lavatory door. Balu entered the lavatory window and silently opened the lavatory door. Should he make a swift and silent dash for the little shelf at the head of the beds where lay the glittering watches, studs, keys, and money?

No; one at least of the Sahibs was of the warrior caste, for a khaki uniform hung on one of the pegs,

and both were young and very English-looking. Suppose one of them woke as he was in the act of seizing the jewels and money! As likely as not he had a baby gun under his pillow and would shoot him as he jumped from the train, if he failed to catch him in the carriage. No, it was tempting the gods, when everything was so ridiculously safe otherwise.

So Balu reached out and hooked unto himself the contents of the clothes-hooks, shut and bolted the door, and sat him down beneath the electric light to examine his haul. First the shirts. That of the man in uniform yielded a pair of gold links. That of the other, who had entered the train in evening dress, a pair of diamond-mounted links and three gold shirt-front studs. So far excellent. The black trousers of the one and the khaki riding-breeches of the other were empty as to pocket. There was nothing of value in the pockets of the khaki tunic, but the buttons were decidedly pleasing and might be of gold. In the side pockets of the black dinner-jacket, nothing; in the breast pocket—Great Kali—yes, no, yes!—a bundle of currency notes! Oh auspicious day! Wisely and well had Balu Dhondu done, in sticking a few grains of rice on the centre of his forehead. It had certainly propitiated the goddess! . . . One, two, three, twenty, twenty-five! Two hundred and fifty rupees! One, Balu Dhondu, would not have to work for many a long day. Bother the clothes—they were not worth removing by such a capitalist as Balu Dhondu, besides being dangerously incriminating and involving much trouble and anxiety before they were safely in the hands of the "fence." The khaki tunic might be of personal use though. Stripped of buttons and rank-marks it would be just a soldier's

cast-off coat, such as *shikaris* and coolies often used. Yes, he would take that.

And after drinking the soapy water in the hand-basin and examining the fittings of the tiny room, Balu Dhondu left the Midnight Mail at his leisure and convenience.

And, with but few set-backs, he had prospered greatly, often living for nearly a year on the proceeds of a single night's haul.

Now he was meditating retirement for various reasons. He felt that he had earned a restful old age; he could very nearly afford it; a new Sahib was at the head of the Calbay District Railway Police and, like all new brooms, was inclined to be officious. This person was reported even to go such lengths as to travel on the line in disguise, sometimes in the third class as a coolie, sometimes in the second as a Eurasian, and sometimes in the first as a fat and wealthy *babu*.

Yes, it was time to make a few good hauls and retire. And, to this end, let nothing be wasted, not even a collar or a handkerchief. "Fencing" arrangements were now nearly as perfect as they could be, and his two worthy sons of a noble sire were in charge of that department, and the elder would be promoted to his own office upon his own retirement.

So Balu Dhondu, as aforesaid, was sitting like a certain famous grass-hopper on the railroad track, and he was once more awaiting the Midnight Mail. . . .

In the first carriage he drew blank. The occupant appeared to be another wily bird, for his clothes were not on the proper peg at all. He must have actually folded them into his portmanteau, and all his money and jewelry were probably under his pillow. Mean fellow!

It would serve him right if Balu quietly tipped his portmanteau out of the window, but he was not going to start taking risks at *his* time of life. If his superior education had given him wit to see and seize the splendid opportunity offered by the lavatory door and clothes-peg arrangement, he was not going to stultify it now.

The next carriage was better. It contained one Sahib who had a wispy red beard, bulbous nose, assorted pimples, and a tremendous snore. He looked so unfighting a Sahib that Balu meditated a breach of his wise resolutions. However, he would see what the clothes contained ere seriously considering the advisability of leaving anything in the carriage of a Sahib with a face so unmasterlike and unsahibly, and whose snore would give confidence to a bungling coolie trying his first clumsy pilfer.

Apparently there was no luggage of any sort or kind in the compartment. Balu took the clothes into the lavatory for inspection. Yes, they would do. The grey flannel shirt would be nice and warm for himself in the cold winter mornings, if a good price were not offered. The bright red handkerchief was pleasing to the eye, the grey woollen socks were thick and warm. The coat and trousers would have a ready sale for a Eurasian's Sunday best, or would appeal to a Goanese cook in search of his trousseau. He would take the lot.

Opening the door again, Balu peeped at the unconscious form of Mr. Claney, and balanced probabilities. There was no luggage, so money might be expected in the pocket-book on the mahogany shelf, where a large watch and a silver chain lay beside some studs and coins, a pipe and a tobacco-purse of

rococo traits. Obviously the man was not dangerous. The leg protruding from the quaint night-dress was skinny, whereas the paunch rose rounded beneath the rug. The alarm-pull was on the opposite side of the carriage from the snorer.

Yes, he would make hay while the sun so obviously shone, and he might make enough of it to enable him to retire forthwith. So Balu entered the compartment and cleared the little shelf, and, then, for he loved a joke, and could pick up the things as he went back; perhaps, he cleared the compartment utterly, even to throwing the black button boots out of the window, and he left to Mr. Claney, nothing but his honour and his nightdress.

So when the Reverend Robert Stirling arose in the morning, took his clothes from his portmanteau, dressed, and alighted at Husseinabad—to which place he had just been posted as Chaplain *vice* the permanent incumbent disabled by a fall from his horse at his own gate—he found a mighty to-do in the next carriage. A strange vulgarian, clad in a pinkish flannel nightgown, was roaring and raving, and would not be comforted.

His words were frequent and fluent and free, and worthy a British M.P.

The native sub-inspector of police was bewildered, the Eurasian station-master was worried, the country-bred ticket-collectors were greatly interested, the Goanese refreshment-room waiter was charmed, and the booking-office *babu* was delighted—it sounded so seditious and delightful.

"Can I help you?" asked the Reverend Robert Stirling.

Mr. Claney swore, and said that anyone who could

do something instead of jabbering would be counted helpful. . . .

"Has your luggage all been stolen too? Isn't it in the van?"

Mr. Claney explained that his luggage had gone to Bombay, that he was on his way to the house of the Deputy Commissioner here in Husseinabad, and that the people of India were thieving scum and ought to be exterminated. . . .

"Is this a Sahib?" asked the native sub-inspector of police.

"It is a robbery, yess!" said the Eurasian station-master, "and the Deputy-Commissioner Sahib died yesterday."

"Love us!" said one country-bred ticket-collector.

"Strike me pink," said the other.

"Sah, you make repart!" said the Goanese refreshment-room waiter.

"Mister, my brother is one highly-respective barrishtar of this city, and will not see gentleman done brown in eye by oppressive fellows," said the booking-office *babu*.

"Look here, you'd better come along with me," said the Reverend Robert Stirling. "I am almost a complete stranger here myself, but I understand that the bachelor-bungalow of the Chaplain, for whom I am to act, is at my disposal—and you can't go to Dainton's house if he is lying dead or is just buried. . . . I'll rig you out and put you up while you send for your kit and get a remittance."

"And how am I to come out o' this, an' get to the house in a night-shirt—me a British M.P. . . . The b-b-bloody thieves!" replied Mr. Claney, almost sobbing in his wrath and dismay.

"Come into my compartment and I'll find you some kit, and then we'll drive off. The train will be here for some time yet. . . . Come on. . . . I daresay clerical garb won't hurt you for a while."

With loud protestations, and vague threats, Claney donned a somewhat heterogeneous and clerically inclined outfit, and after "making repart" as to his losses, entered the Chaplain's dog-cart, which had been dispatched to meet the Reverend Robert Stirling, *locum tenens* Chaplain of Husseinabad, unconsciously and unintentionally brought thither by one, Hari K. V. Dé, who was responsible for the injuring of the permanent incumbent. . . . And, as the dog-cart left the station-yard, with its babel of coolies, shouting gharri-wallahs, porters, bullock-drivers, and police, these two alumni of British Universities came face to face, and one of them ejaculated "Stirling!" and then tried to look as though he hadn't. Stirling saw a filthy, ash-smeared, evil-looking creature, arrayed in a dirty rag, chalked as to the face, and crowned with mud, tow, and cow-dung, and utterly failed to recognize the former fiancé of Miss Veronica Stirling.

Hari K. V. Dé, mendicant, seditionist, potential murderer, and foul-living beast, saw, sitting beside a European in an overcoat, a burly, healthy-looking English gentleman in clerical dress, apparently in no wise changed, save as to garb, since the day on which he had brutally assaulted him and broken off the match with his sister.

Stirling pulled up. "Who are you and how do you know my name?" he asked.

Dé played his part well; though, had he had one of the stock of automatic pistols with him, it is possible he would have risked capture and hanging, then and there.

"Nothing is hid from me," he chanted, waving his arms and rolling up his eyes until only the whites showed. "Your name I know, and your father's name—Joseph—and your only sister's name—Veronica. I see you at the University of Oxford running with an egg-shaped ball beneath your arm. I see you sitting in the Vicarage of St. Jude's, with a terrier-dog beside you, while your mother works a lace pattern on a pillow in which are stuck many pins."

"The Devil you do!" was the unregenerate reply of the Acting-Chaplain. "I have heard a lot of wonderful yarns about you fellows, but I have always suspected bunkum and trickery. What do you want?"

"I come to warn you. Your end is near. Shortly you will die, and as you die in blood and agony, a name will be hissed in your ear! What say you?"

"Well, I say your English is extraordinarily good, and that you might put it to better use. Good-morning, and many thanks for the kind hint."

As he whipped up the depressed clerical Bucephalos he remarked to the even more depressed Claney: "If there were any Adelphi Drama in India, I should say that sportsman was a zealous student of it! . . . Rum country!"

Anon they met, and Mr. Claney saluted one, Mr. Muirhead-Carne, to whom he had delivered a letter of introduction, on board the *Arabia*, a letter given him by a young Indian gentleman.

After breakfast Stirling announced his intention of visiting the hospital in which the permanent incumbent lay; and Claney said that he hadn't the heart to carry out the work he had projected, as all his plans had gone wrong, and he wasn't going to make a guy of himself at any public meeting togged up in the duds

of a blooming Church of England parson. . . . However, he would be glad to be driven over to the High School in the cool of the evening, as he wished to sow some good seed in young minds—the best soil of all.

Stirling hinted that he was quite at liberty to discard the duds of the blooming parson and resume his night-shirt if he preferred it, and that he would drive him over to the school, and introduce him to his old friend Harris, and give himself the pleasure of hearing the address.

"Four-thirty o'clock sharp, then," said Claney, "and I understand that Mr. Muirhead-Carne here will introduce me."

Stirling departed, and Mr. Claney had some beer and then some more beer. Thereafter he wrote impassioned and rather obscurely expressed letters to the Press, the Governor of Calbay—hitherto ignored—and the Chief Commissioner of the Division—concerning the robbery. Then he wept beery tears.

William Tom Claney, Esquire, M.P., was not nearly as good at bearing trouble as he was at causing it.

His trouble would have been greater had he known that Dainton's death—for which he was indirectly responsible—and his own consequent sojourning with Stirling, had placed him in great danger

CHAPTER XIII

THE DISCIPLINE OF CONSEQUENCES

THE Criminal stood awaiting trial and sentence before Daddy's awful desk in Daddy's awful office-room in Sudden-Death Lodge, in which were guns, saddles, spurs, whips, old weapons, and trophies of the chase.

"What a room to rumble and rootle!" thought the Criminal—even as some fierce Viking may have thought "What a city to sack," as he gazed upon a fair town nestling in a fold of coast-wise hills.

The Criminal wore but one sock, a sleeveless bodice, and a pair of brief but voluminous shorts, which displayed plump thighs, chubby, and undeniably dirty, knees, and sturdy calves.

With feet together, arms folded behind his back, and drooping head, he awaited his fate.

But he had no defence, and he knew that he need not hope to throw himself on the mercy of the Court with success, for the Court frankly did not like it, and was in the habit of saying: "You have done wrong, so take your gruel like a man. You *know* wrong-doing must mean punishment, so if you don't like punishment, don't do wrong."

Of course a lie to avert punishment was entirely out of the question to one who was of equestrian rank and desired to retain it—but there is no harm in honest ingenuity. Doubtless the Knights of the Round Table and King Arthur himself were ingenious.

Accident? No, one does not steal goat's food and eat it by accident. Absence of mind? No, one does not pinch a boxful of mixed grain, bran, and peas, and pick out the peas till one has a pocketful, absent-mindedly. Hunger and desperate straits for food? Not just after a breakfast of porridge, fish, marmalade and fruit.

For the pea-shooter? It was well known that the large, brown, parched peas affected by goats would not go into that instrument at all. The fact had often been bitterly deplored.

For agricultural purposes? Too thin, and besides, a lie.

One *might* have been casual or absent-minded or even sub-consciously hungry, to the extent of just tentatively suggesting these reasons for the Court to do with as it would, but a blank lie must be avoided like poison.

What a pity he had not shared with Nibble, Twitch, Whiskerandos, or Nan—or, better, offered some for rejection by Widdy the Second, Venus, or Nebuchadnezzar—there would then have been the makings of an excuse anyhow. Not exactly "The animal tempted me and I did eat," or quite a suggestion of stealing to save the lives of hungry others—the doing of a little wrong to do a great right, but a sort of "not for myself alone" kind of idea. . . . No, better say out like a man "I thought I'd like some and I just took some, and that's all about it" . . . Ah! but what about Satan? Miss Brown said he always went about seeking what he might devour. Perhaps he fancied goat's-food and devoured it by proxy, as it were, tempting an innocent boy! Might try Satan, perhaps. It was absolutely true, too, if there was any reliance to be placed upon the Brown theology and demonology. It wasn't so much that one really wanted an actual excuse as that one wanted something to say when put to the Question and tortured with the horrible repetition of "Well, what have you to say for yourself, and why did you do this terrible thing—at your age too?" . . . Try the 'normous old Devil, anyhow, and see how he was received by the Court. One looked such a silly dumb ass if one could say absolutely nothing.

"Well, and what have you been sent to me for," asked the Court, taking it for granted that when a small cherub enters, after knocking at the dread, forbidden door, with hanging head and dragging step,

and assumes a prisoner's dock attitude and air, there is Crime in the neighbourhood.

"For eating, Daddy," replied the Cherub.

"Hm! I didn't know that eating was an indictable offence. *Whom* have you been eating?"

"No one, Daddy."

"*What* have you been eating?"

"Peas, Daddy."

"And a very wholesome article of diet when well cooked, I understand. Plenty of—er—carbohydrates and nitrogen and what-is-it—if slightly excessive in uric acid. *Whose* peas?"

"Lady Buffy's, Daddy."

"Ho, ho! *Now* we have the truth of the villainy. Been robbing a poor, harmless, hard-working, respectable animal, have you? A more or less dumb animal! Been robbing a—er—in short, a goat? How is the goat to go on giving milk if deprived of the nourishment suitable to its years and station? Shockin'! Shockin'! How do you account for it, Sir, eh? What have you to say for yourself, eh? At *your* age, too! What!"

"I think the Devil tempted me, Daddy—but I'm not sure. I don't want to blame him, of courth, if he didn't."

"The *what* tempted you?"

"The Devil, Daddy."

"Well, let me assure you that you are mistaken. And I'll tell you why. Because *there is no such thing* as a Devil. Who told you there was?"

"Miss Brown. She said he goes about seeking what he may devour and awful hungry, and roaring like a lion. I thunk I heard him once."

"Well, you didn't. It was probably Miss Brown

snoring. You take *my* word for it, there is *no* Devil whatsoever. For once in her blameless and beautiful life Miss Brown is wrong. There are wicked, evil boys who rob fair, lactiferous, young, matron goats, and there are silly old women of both sexes, but there is no Devil."

Daddy was much given to the habit of thinking aloud and rumbled on. "How much longer is a more or less civilized race going to retain devil-worship among its evil and mediæval superstitions? I'll scalp that virtuous female if she don't stop doing her best to make the children cowardly, hell-fearing, devil-dodgers. Fancy sane and partly educated people preaching a God and a Devil in the same Universe, and calling 'God-fearing' what is pure devil-fearing! 'God is Love and has instituted a grand Hell and a competent Stoker,' whom, by the way, He cannot control. Strikes me as too dam funny for words. 'You're born full of original sin and if you sin you're damned,' saith the—Guddle. Anyhow I'll keep the Devil out of *this* house if possible." . . .

"So you robbed the goat, Sir, did you? And you'd blame a creature that does *not* exist, would you? To think that child of mine should be a Goat-Robber and a Devil-Worshipper at the age of what-is-it! And how many times have you been forbidden to do this?"

"About five, I think, Daddy."

"Terrible! Old in sin! Steeped in goat-robbery! A quintessent, pentastic, pea-pincher. What shall be done with such a feller?"

More mumbled soliloquy.

"Ah! Why not apply the famous and beautiful Discipline of Consequences! Unrivalled as a means of child-training. Cheap, reliable, and efficacious. An

excellent substitute for the brutalizing rod—which was good enough for a healthy kid in my day. Splendid opportunity. Kid steals goat-food—tell kid he *is* a goat, and must act as such. Tie him up, and give him grass. Make him *moo*, and so forth. Couldn't be clearer. Repentant, tearful kid sickens at the sight of goat-food for ever more, or oughter." . . .

"Listen to me, Sir, and cease attempting to whistle with one nostril, for it can't be done. What follows is Logic, and the Discipline of Consequences—highly recommended. You eat goat's food—therefore you *are* a goat. You are a goat—therefore you have to be tied up, say *baa-a-a*, butt at people, eat a dinner of herbs, and generally—er—play the goat. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Daddy. I am to play being a goat."

"You are. But it is not a game mind, it's a punishment. Don't you go making game of the Discipline of Consequences. Go and get me a strap and a skipping rope."

The Criminal departed, and nearly knocked his sister over as he pranced out of the door, withdrawing the keyhole suddenly from her eye.

"What are you going to get, Fic? Is it bed, imprisonment, or sitting dumb on a chair?"

"We're going to play goats, Daddy and I."

"But what about the punishment for eating the poor old goat's food when you had been told not to, so often?"

"That *is* the punishment. I want a strap and a piece of rope, and we're going to play it."

"Then I shall steal some too." . . .

Daddy put the strap round the neck of the "goat," attached one end of the rope to the strap and the other

to the leg of the table, sent for hay and goat-food, and bade the criminal act the goat unceasingly and to the uttermost, on the pain of his high displeasure.

Of the acting there was nothing to complain. It was lifelike, zestful, the work of a Realist.

Piercing *baa-a-a-a-s* filled the bungalow and drove Daddy to distraction. He bore it long, for the sake of the Theory, but at last strength and courage failed him.

"That will do, Goat," he said, "now eat."

And the Goat ate. Cheerfully, nay delightedly, the little animal fed, picking out the peas and chumping them with gusto.

Anon it began to frisk, and its friskings shook the table so violently that Daddy could not write. In wrath he arose and went round to the goat, which butted him with violence upon the breakfast.

"Hi, Goat!" said he. "Here boy, good dog, lie down then! Poor fella!" The Goat obediently lay down and bleated softly to itself—the bleating having a marked resemblance to the tune of "Abide with Me."

Daddy bore it long and well, and in time silence fell. A brief silence—broken all too soon by horrid sounds, growls, stranglings, throaty spasms, and, alas, loud eructations.

"What the dooce are you doing, Goat?" cried Daddy in alarm.

"*BAA-A-A-A-A*. Chewing the Cub. *BAAAAA-A-A-A-A*," was the piercing reply.

The rumination successfully accomplished, the goat emitted heart-rending groans which, in course of time, swelled to roars.

"What is that pernicious row about?" asked Daddy,

who was struggling with a difficult and complicated calculation.

"Time I was milked. I'm thimply bustin'," howled the Goat.

Daddy gave it up. Looking at his watch he remarked: "Your punishment has lasted long enough now, and you may go. I will untie you. Let this be a lesson to you never to touch the goat's food again."

"Pleathe, Daddy, I don't want to be untied. Can't we play goats a little longer? And may Boodle come and be a goat too? She has gone to steal some goat's food on purpose."

Daddy propelled the Goat from the room, and shutting the door, said emphatically and distinctly:—

"*Damn* the Discipline of Consequences." . . .

"It's no good, Boodle," said the released one, as he found his sister seated on the edge of the bin in which reposed the fodder, and selecting peas. "I asked him to let me go on longer and have you in to play it too, but he gave me a toe-up."

Grown Ups are kittle cattle and incomprehensible strange creatures. . . .

What to do till siesta time? The Club, of course, but should it be Sport, Drama, Literature, Music, or what?

"What was that Mummy said they saw last night at the Gymkhana?" asked Ficcie. "It seemed like acting. I think it was Tablets."

"No, Table O Vee Vong," said his sister. "Yes. We'll play it. I asked Mummy all about it. Where's that lovely History book? We'll do the lot, and it'll keep us going for years. Buster will have to come for some of them, but there's lots we can do alone, or with Venus and Widdy and the rest."

"Is it acting weally?"

"Not quite. You just do what is in a picture, and stay like it until you are fed up and get the hump."

"What then?"

"You chuck it."

"And then?"

"You start another, and stick that till you are fed up again, and you don't speak. If you speak it's acting, and if you don't, it's Table O Vee Vong. It ought to be great fun, I think; and you aren't much good at saying the things."

"No," admitted the mere male, "it's welly hard to wemember it sometimes."

"Come on, then. Get the book, and all the clothes, and swords, and crowns, and things, and we'll see how many we can Tabble (or p'r'aps it's Tabulate)."

The Club became Dramatic with the help of the History Pictures, all its properties, Venus, Widdy II, and Amir the rocking-horse. The Vice's proposal to smuggle in Jock, the pony, from the stables was considered and reluctantly negatived.

"Let's do Queen Elizabeth and Sir Walter Raleigh first," said the President, when all was ready. "That only wants two really, and Venus and Widdy can be courtiers and ladies."

"What shall I wear?" enquired the Vice. "He's dressed up in velvet and a lace collar. Why, it's just like that rotten suit I wear to parties!"

"Yes! Lovely!" agreed the President. "You get it out while I find some things, and a crown and sceptre. Kings and Queens always carry sceptres. I wonder why?"

"I aspect it is to biff any courtier with," mused the Vice, "or p'waps because they always had the hounds

about, instead of keeping them at the Kennels. They wouldn't like them pawing over their best robes."

In a surprisingly short time the Vice, who on principle always stoutly opposed and ingeniously retarded the efforts of others to achieve a change of his costume or to wash him, appeared wearing a royal-blue velvet suit, a lace collar, a fencing foil done on with a curtain-rope, and a panama hat, adorned with an ostrich feather plucked untimely from a "picture" hat of Mummy's.

The President, resplendent in a pink ball-gown recently from Paris, and crowned with a beaded candle-shade, essayed the nice conduct of a clouded cane or sceptre, which bore a distinct resemblance to a razor-edged Malay kriss from the staircase wall. Venus came trailing clouds of *chiffon*, and Widdy trailed an opera cloak with an air of pride.

"Go and make some mud with a flowerpot in the bathroom," said the Queen to Sir Walter.

Nothing loth, Sir Walter hugged to his bosom a fair-sized pot of fern, bore it to the bathroom, and, with the earth obtained by inverting the pot, made a liberal supply of the required commodity, and bore a moiety thereof to the scene of the Event, in the bowl devoted to the drinking purposes of Venus.

"That's right," approved the Queen. "Now make a jolly good sploshy puddle of the mud in front of my State Coach, while I harness Amir to it."

A ruthlessly emptied drawer, provided with a drawing-room stool and a Union Jack, made an admirable coach, and Amir a trustworthy team of cream ponies. The Queen, holding a parasol, a whip, and a sceptre, looked queenly. A large hole in her stocking lent an air of reality and humanity.

"Woh," cried the Queen to her team, as a sign that the tableau was set and all ready. Sir Walter Raleigh happened to pass humming an air, as Her Majesty stepped from the coach, and halted before the mud.

"S'pose I must jump it," she remarked, and kilted up her skirts right generously.

"Hold on, your liege," cried Sir Walter, observing the dilemma of his Queen. "If you don't mind my shirt sleeves I can save you the trouble, and without giving you a bunk, either."

Suiting the action to the word, the knightly and chivalrous person hastily removed his coat and laid it carefully on the mud.

"Thanks awfully," said Her Majesty, as she stepped across. "I hope you won't catch cold," and the incident was closed. . . .

"Wasn't that splendid?" said the Vice. "We weally *acted* after all, and didn't have to wemember anything either. I think it is much better to make it up as you go along."

"All right," agreed the President. "We'll act all the pictures and say just what we like. Let's do the execution of Charles the First, now—only you'll have to chop jolly carefully if we have a real chopper. I think, p'raps, I'd better be the Executioner."

"Yes, and I'll be poor old Charles. Better put Venus and Widdy in mourning, and they can be kind friends and welations on the scaffolding."

"I think it's the gibbet, but we can call it the Block. I think *I'd* like to be King Charles, only you'd give me such an awful wump, I expect—whether you had a real axe or not. Yes, I'll be the king, and you must have a towel for the chopper."

"Oh, Boodle, you said *I* could be the King. You can chop me as hard as you like."

"Well, let's cast lots."

Casting lots in the Junior Curlton Club was a process curiously like the ancient "Divination by Animals," and had been invented by these young people just as it had been invented by several Young Peoples very early in their history. To cast lots you went to the hutch of Nibble and Twitch in the back verandah and called seductively. If Nibble was the first to emerge from the domestic inner chamber the lot fell on the President, and if Twitch preceded, the Vice was evidently the favoured of Fate. If one happened to be in the outer court already, why, the matter was settled accordingly; and if both were out, the President, being a lady, had her way.

Divination in this instance showed that the star of the Vice was in the ascendant.

"Very well," acquiesced the President, "I shall be both Executioner and Bishop Buxom or Jackson, or whatever his name was, and you have to talk to me, and give me keepsakes while you get ready to be executioned. Fill your pockets with keepsakes. Then, when you are ready to be executioned, I put on a marksk and get the fatal axe."

And so it was.

A small black toque, a black sash, and a bow of bootlace on his tail, gave Venus a sufficiently mourning air, while Widdy II meekly bore the black ostrich feather attached to her collar.

Bishop Juxon wore a night-dress and a tall white "mitre," which had a curious likeness to a paper bag. As he daintily lifted his surplice a large hole in his stocking lent him, also an air of reality and humanity.

His Majesty saw fit to don a green and heliotrope jockey's "silk"—survival of the day when Daddy did not weigh fifteen stone—and, by way of head-gear, a brass bowl. At the Bishop's request he wore his watch and a fine cardboard star, as well as a garter of red ribbon, which had seen service on the President's hair.

The drawer which had served as a state coach made, inverted, an admirable and spacious block—such is the fecundity of Necessity the mother, and a tennis-racket, a satisfactory axe.

With a large handkerchief to his eye, the King, shaken by piteous sobs, mounted the scaffold by stepping on to the rug on which lay the sinister block.

"Don't blubber, My Majesty," said the Bishop soothingly.

"How'd you like *your* head cut off with a beastly fatal axe?" wept the doomed King.

"Well, it won't last long, so buck up and be a man, your Royalty," replied the episcopal comforter.

"That 'normous executioner shouldn't be allowed more than one shot," protested the Monarch, "and, if he misses, I get up. If he cuts my head in half instead of cutting it off, he ought not to be paid."

"Undress, Charles," said the Bishop.

"How much?" inquired the King.

"Well, no need to get your coat and waistcoat all nasty. The shirt can go to the *dhobi*,[1] of course."

The doomed man removed his outer garment and folded it neatly. He then unpinned the star from his bodice and evoked the watch from the innermost recesses of his pocketless shorts.

[1] Washerman.

"You may have these. They're no good to me, I s'pose. Jolly shame, isn't it?"

"Rough luck, Your Highety," agreed the Bishop. "Does the watch keep good time?"

"You can give these to your little boy, or wear them yourself," continued the King, removing his braces and handing them to the Bishop.

Upon receiving the last of the gifts a change came o'er the good Bishop. Removing his surplice and mitre, he donned a blood-red jersey and a cloth cap, the peak of which pointed backward. A handkerchief, beneath which he could just peep, served him as a mask. In his hand the dread Executioner bore a tennis bat. A large hole in his stocking lent him, too, an air of reality, if not of humanity.

"Kneel down and put your head on the block, young fellow," said he.

The Martyr King obeyed with the remark:—

"Don't you be a butter-fingers, Pobby-Nose."

"Say a prayer," continued the Headsman, rightly ignoring the unroyal taunt. The usual thing is, 'Into thy hands I condemn my spirit,' but, if you can't remember that, say your 'grace.'"

"For what we are about to receive, Amen," sobbed the unfortunate Stuart.

"Now shut your eyes and keep still, and, when you want it off, stick out your hand. But I shan't wait more than a minute."

The King stretched forth his hand and the blow fell.

He died hard, with wondrous contortions, writhings, snorts, and jerks. What appeared to be murmured curses were audible. The end was revealed by his throwing out his limbs violently and ejaculating "Pop." . . . . . .

"Yes—a very good day, on the whole . . . until bedtime and the appearance of that dreary uninvited guest, who was there, as plain as plain, and then somehow *wasn't*, when Daddy came, in response to shouts of "*Here's old Waxworks, Daddy.*"

CHAPTER XIV

WINE AND SONG

WILLIAM TOM CLANEY, Esquire, M.P. for Jewsditch, was feeling low. As he sat in a long chair in the verandah of the disabled Chaplain and reviewed the events of the past few weeks, he groaned and felt "low in his mind." Things hadn't panned out as he had intended and expected. The "snobs" on the ship had seemed to hate him as soon as he had said he was going to regenerate India. Blooming bureaucrats had made him look small when he had talked about Injer, and had carried on as if they were the only people who knew anything about the beastly place. The Europeans in the towns he had visited had looked at him as if he was a mad dog when they heard who he was, and the Anglo-Indian Press had been unanimous in saying shocking and horrible things about him. Hadn't a man a *right* to political activity in a free country—and especially a famous Member of Parliament, such as he was?

And the Native Press had been incautious—dam silly in fact—and blurted out all he had said in private meetings and put more to it. There would be questions asked at Home—nasty awkward questions. Things looked so different in cold English print from what they sounded in private meetings among flattering,

kind friends. What the vernacular papers had *said* he said, Goodness only knew. Then the terrible experience of the day before yesterday! He would hear the ticking of that bomb to his dying day if he lived to be a hundred. The cowardly brutes, to round on him with a bomb, because he had recommended the use of bombs, and to talk about man-handling him because he had said you had a right to handle them who stood in your light! . . . And, to crown all, the robbery last night that landed him in a strange place dressed in a night-shirt, and without a stitch of clothes or a farthing of money!

What was he to do? Sponge on this Stirling for a bit, borrow some money, and then follow his luggage, and overtake it at Cook's—or borrow a bit more and wait while he got some togs made here? Stirling had said there wasn't a ready-made suit to be bought in the place for love or money. How long would it take to get a black bob-tail and some striped trousers made? Hardly safe to wait long! . . . He could hear that awful Pathan bloke talking yet! . . . "*Beware!*" he had said. . . . Yes, and they'd keep him alive at the bottom of a well for a month first, and then do him in gradual, with horrible tortures. *Could* anything be a more awful torture than to sit with a ticking bomb between your feet, not knowing whether it was going off in five seconds or five hours? . . . No, he wouldn't run any risks by hanging about. . . . Best get out of it as soon as he had obeyed the orders of that murdering, bomb-slinging, secret society, and warned the committee here, same as he had done at Karabad. . . . Lor! how the fat man had put his tail down, and how blooming small they had sung when he had told them the other lot was

going to chuck a bomb on their own account—and that into an anarchist meeting! . . . They didn't seem to think it was fair! . . . The usual trouble was to get rid of the blighters once they button-holed you, but that little lot hadn't wanted any hints. . . . They found they'd got pressin' urgent business elsewhere—pretty quick. Talk about di'mond cut di'mond! They hadn't wanted much cutting. . . . Lord! *What* a fool he'd been! Messed the whole business, lost all his money, had a shock that he'd never recover, and now got this secret society on his track for life. . . . And trouble waiting for him when he got back to England! . . . Very likely got hold of some of this enteric, or cholera, or smallpox too. . . . He had a awful headache, no appetite, and didn't get any satisfaction out of his bacca neither. . . . Anything might be wrong with him—better see a doctor at once. . . . What a *fool* he had been! . . . Why couldn't he have stopped at home and enjoyed himself?

The butler appeared with a card, or rather a slip of dirty paper, on which was written in red ink, "Narasimhaiengar Venkataramaiah Rajadhyaksha, Esq., and friends, soliciting favour of humble interview."

How he longed to say "Tell 'em to go to hell and stop there," but the fear of the terrible secret society that had spies in every committee, and would know every word he said and every deed he did, was strong upon him.

"Fetch 'em here," he said instead.

The deputation entered the verandah and its salaams were many and servile.

"Honoured Sir," said the leader, a young man with a very large head, very large spectacles, a very large

mouth, and a very small chest, in the thinnest and squeakiest voice Claney had ever heard, "let me preface my humble words of hearty welcome with a most sincere apology for our suffering you to arrive at our famous city without a deputation to receive you and conduct you in triumph with martial music as conquering hero. But we were knowing nothing of time of your honoured arrival and hence seeming" . . .

"It's no go, Cocky," interrupted the Statesman. "It's all U,P, UP!"

The leader looked puzzled, but concluded that he must have been a little too fast for the distinguished visitor, whom he understood to be a coolie in his own country.

"Honoured Sir," he said, a little more shrilly, "let me preface my humble words of hearty welcome with a most sincere apology for our suffering you to arrive at our famous city without a deputation to receive you and conduct you in triumph with martial music as conquering hero." . . .

"Conquering hero be everlastin'ly damned," said the distinguished visitor.

The spokesman was not daunted, and he loved the sound of his voice better than that of the voices of fair women, or anything else in the world.

The deputation shuffled and wished the Statesman had sufficient knowledge to be aware that men of their rank were entitled to chairs in the presence of officials, and had manners enough to offer them.

"Honoured Sir," said the spokesman, and his never still, small voice was a thing to make the patient Job himself reach for a weapon of offence, "let me preface my humble words of hearty welcome with a most sincere apology for our suffering you to arrive at our

famous city without a deputation to receive you and conduct you in triumph with martial music" . . .

"Marshal Music be everlastin'ly damned," observed the distinguished stranger. "And you and your deputation and your famous city likewise. I wish it and them and you was under the sea, and Injer on top of you, and that a mile deep! See?" and he replaced the "smoke" he had removed for clarity and impressiveness of diction.

The politicians stared in amazement. Was *this* the Friend of India, the trump card to be played for all it was worth, the silly M.P. delivered unto them, bound hand and foot? . . . Was this a bogus Claney? Or, more likely, was this just the pleasant way of the low-caste coolie? Obviously he was no Sahib—as they already knew in fact—so why expect sahibly behaviour?

"We do not understand your honour," said one of the gang, as the unconquerable spokesman began again with "Honoured Sir, let me preface my humble words of hearty welcome with a most sincere apology" . . .

"I know you don't," said Claney. "If you can sit on that bloke's head a minute an' listen, I'll *tell* you. It's all *up*, I say. It's blown on, and it's bust. And I'm off while I'm alive an' healthy. Likewise you take my tip and do the same. There's another organization, a sight bigger than yours, and a sight cleverer. And they're whole-hoggers, an' they do their own dirty work too, and don't wait for any half-witted, half-starved students to do it for 'em.

"Moreover, they got a spy in every single headquarters committee of every town of your potty organization. They've had spies in every one of my most

secret meetings, and *there's a spy among you now.* Besides which, they're bloodthirsty murderers, and they've sworn to murder every single man that joins an anarchistic political society. So you watch out, my lads. They had *me* fair enough! Got me to their meeting and tied me up with a ticking bomb between me feet, until I swore I'd skip out of Injer as soon as I let the Karabad gang know, and then you lot. Now I told you, an' you can hop it. I'm done with you. And the cove here that's their spy can tell 'em I gave you fair warning."

The deputation gasped and was lessened by one, as Claney finished speaking. The orator seized his opportunity and began, "Honoured Sir, let me preface my humble words of hearty welcome with a most sincere" . . . and thereupon Mr. Claney arose and said: "You start that again an' I'll give you a slap in the chops that'll shut you up for a week."

Another of the deputation faded into the past.

"Are we to understand," said the man who interrupted before, "that you desert us?"

"You are," said Mr. Claney. "But the Friends of India won't desert you! You hold one more meeting and you are dead men in a day or two! Nasty messy dead, too. This opposition society is Pathans mostly, an' they are not out for their health. *Nor* yours. And they got more guts in a dozen of 'em than in an army of you. . . . You chuck it or they'll make you." . . .

Two more of the deputation went home without further delay.

"Who has organized *Pathans* to oppose us? Who can have thought of adopting *our* methods and turning them against ourselves?"

"Dunno," said Mr. Claney, "and don't want. *I'm* done with it, anyhow. See? And you pass it on to any others whose health may be of interest to you. And now you can clear out and stop out. So long" . . . and Mr. Claney was alone with his gloomy thoughts once more.

Lord! *what* a fool he'd been and what wretched conspirators these creatures were! What infernal cowards. . . . Would the butler think it funny if he asked for some more beer? The more you drank in this country the thirstier you got, and your beer didn't seem to lie comfortable neither. . . .

The beer materialized, and ice with it. . . . The quicker the second-class European drank it, the sooner more would be ordered and the butler get his little commission. "Always encourage consumption," was the motto of Tulsiram Butler.

The fifth bottle since lunch went to assist its forerunners in cooling a Statesman's heat.

What should he do about this blooming school? The secret society had told him to go, so perhaps he'd better. But what should he say to the kids? He had purposed to rub it in thick—but that would hardly do now! Nasty awkward position. *Wouldn't* he just look a fool talking silly twaddle about loyalty and good-behaviour, when he had intended to sow some "good seed," and sow it pretty thick too.

Dare he speak his mind in face of the chance of there being a spy of the secret society present? No, he dared not. He wasn't taking any chances. Not even when full of beer. But suppose there wasn't any chance? Suppose there was nobody present there except the kids and their blooming schoolmaster and Stirling? The kids couldn't be members of secret

societies, loyal or otherwise, and certainly the others couldn't. Well, he'd "wait an' see." If there was the possibility of danger he'd be circumspect and talk like a blooming Sunday-school, but if it was absolutely certain there couldn't be any spy there and, of course, no reporters, he'd say what he blooming well liked. and next day he'd be off towards Bombay and safety. All tosh about their watching him here and on board ship and in England. *Gaaaaarn away!* They didn't diddle Bill Claney with *that* flummery. And waxing pot-valiant the Senator snapped his fingers, hiccupped, and went all to pieces as beer washed off veneer.

. . .

More beer; more, more still.

Wot they take 'im for? . . . Free country, don't it? Werry well, then, why argyify? Wossermarrer witherm? Nobody arstem innerfere dithay? Norrabidovit. Lemmind therown business and let gemman mind his. Many things possle that ain't probble!

And the Legislator slept—loudly.

Towards tea-time a Mr. Stephen Muirhead-Carne drove into the compound and was aware of two singularly repulsive-looking and filthy *fakirs* or *sanyasis*, he did not note which, who squatted in the dust near the entrance gate and begged of passers-by.

"No, that is not he," said one to the other after Muirhead-Carne had passed. "I have already told you he is a *padre* and wears the garb of one—as they do in England. You remember the dress."

"Without doubt," replied the other.

"Make no mistake, then, and let him not escape you. Will he never come! I need sleep and I would eat," said Dé.

"Why wait to show him to me? The new padre living in this house shall die. You have given me more than life, my brother, and I will give you *his* life, since you desire it," replied Dagga.

"It is well. Come, then, and I will show thee once again how the automatic pistol works. Night will be the best time. Thou wilt see him through the windows, if he walk not in the garden after dinner, or sit in the verandah. Thy chance will come."

And the other replied: "It will surely come, for should it come not otherwise, I will bring it. What have I to fear? Is not the pistol loaded with Golden Keys? Ha! Ha!" . . . His laughter was that of a lunatic. . . .

Claney awoke to find Muirhead-Carne regarding him askance, and shaking him by the shoulder. "It's getting late," said he. "How are you? By Jove! When did you 'take the veil'? You were a layman when I saw you last. I heard from Stirling that you were here. He'll be back in a minute. We're to have tea. He came over to the school, where I happened to be, to see Harris, the Head, who was at Oxford with him."

"Orlright," said Claney. "Lummy, I wish I wasn't a teetotaller. I could do with a pick-me-up. I'm all nervy." And he told his visitor of the robbery, and the borrowing of semi-clerical garb from Stirling, at great length.

"Great mistake to be a teetotaller in this country," said Muirhead-Carne. "A man simply *must* have his peg. Liver won't work without alcohol. Plenty of gin keeps your kidneys right, too. I don't know that short drinks and cock-tails do you any particular *good*, but

your whisky-and-soda or brandy-and-soda is an absolute necessity if you are to do your work."

As Muirhead-Carne never did his work, it may be that he was as sound an authority on the benefits of alcohol as he was upon labour.

"D'you think a drop of brandy would do me good? I got a mouth like a lime-kiln, and a head like a humming-top."

"The very thing you need," said the visitor. "Just what you want. You have a good, stiff brandy-and-soda. . . . Here's Stirling! . . . I am just prescribing a stiff peg for Mr. Claney," he remarked to the newcomer. "He's feeling off-colour."

"Well, I'd put my faith in tea, personally," said Stirling, "but if he prefers brandy, I have no doubt we can raise some. My predecessor was not a teetotaller."

"I *am*, usually, you know," said the Pride of Jewsditch.

Mr. Claney felt worlds better for the four-finger peg of brandy—for a time—and his courage and eloquence rose together.

"They will be ready for you at the school, as soon as you like after four-thirty," said Stirling.

"Thenks, ole Cock," said the Legislator, a little thickly. "Wonner wot I'm agoin' to say to 'em!"

"I don't suppose you'll feel like saying very much, after your recent trouble," remarked Stirling.

"No. P'r'aps not. But I had meant to say a lot—I tell you. I had been goin' to surprise some of you—but I seen trouble more'n you know about," and the Senator seemed to be about to weep. However, another go of brandy, which he absent-mindedly poured

out, seemed to change passive woe to active wrath and indignation.

"An' why shouldn' I say what I wanner say? Ain't there *any* freedom of speech for an Englishman in this benighted country? Can all these bloomin' heathen say just wot they like, and write just wot they like, an' me got to hold me tongue? Shan't hold me tongue at all! I shall say just wot I thing fid. 'Oo d'yer think *you* are—yer blarsted (hic) Pathan?". . .

More brandy. . . .

"I don't think I should go at all, if I were you," said Stirling. "You're not quite yourself. . . . Or too much yourself. . . ."

"D'yer mean I'm *drunk*? If so, you up an say so, you mealy-mugged sky-pilot, and then take yer coat off and see me push yer face in. Go on—you say it!"

"My dear Mr. Claney," replied Stirling, who was fourteen stone of amateur boxing champion, "you really must not dream of smiting a poor, harmless, and defenceless clergyman."

"D'yer beg my pardon, then?"

"Humbly!"

"*Mos'* humbly?"

"Most humbly. But, all the same, I shouldn't go if I were you. You aren't well, you know."

"Ah! You'd shirk no doubt, if *you* wasn't well, but I ain't that sort. You shut your silly head, an' come an' hear a speech as'll poosmartinyer. I said 'Poo some 'art in yer,' didn't I? Very well, then, you go bed."

"What's to be done, Muirhead-Carne?" asked Stirling. "This is sad—sad—sad, isn't it?"

The Legislator obliged with a song—which wandered East and West, and mentioned Siam and Algiers.

"*I* don't know. If he *will* go, I suppose he must. One can't 'unlawfully detain' a British subject."

"No, but Harris can refuse a drunken man admission to his Academy for young Gentlemen."

"Not if he is determined to be admitted."

"Then he has changed since I knew him."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I should think that if Harris is in charge of that school and responsible for it, he would sling out a drunken man with his own lily white hand, whoever introduced him."

"Harris would get into bad trouble. The man is an M.P."

The Senator sang unto the Earth a new song. It concerned one Scafoozalum, a Lady of Jeroozalum.

"Then shall we go across, or will you charm our friend in talk while I go and tell Harris that the Wanderer is o'ertook and uplifted and fou."

"'*Blessin's on ole David!*' Chorus, gemmen," roared the Statesman, and waved a peg-tumbler in the air—the contents of which, obeying the law of centrifugal force, as the Pride of Jewsditch swung the tumbler round, descended upon the anointed head of Mr. Muirhead-Carne and trickled chillily, if intimately, down ward to the veiled beauties of his bust.

"He must have been drinking all day," said Stirling.

"He's a teetotaller as a rule, I understand," replied Muirhead-Carne. "The little brandy has got to his head, probably."

"Yes. I think a little beer has got to his stomach first, though. He has a real teetotaller's nose too, hasn't he? I am always suspicious of the man who has a habit of moistening his lips, and especially when he drains his glass of spirits off at a quick draught. . . .

He's about as much a teetotaller as I am a drunkard," observed Stirling, who had always regarded alcohol as a medicine—and an undesirable one.

" ' I-TI-TIDDLY-'I-UMPSHY-BUMPSHY-AY,"

bawled the teetotaller tunefully, and poured out some brandy.

" Come along, Claney, bed-time," said Stirling, seizing the bottle. " We're all off to bed now, getting late. Come on," and he took the festive Member and Representative of the Electors of Jewsditch by the arm.

That eminent man commenced to dance with extreme gravity and precision of step, and addressed the Reverend Robert Stirling as " Donah," as his Sorcy Little Kipper, and eke as " Kite," which latter may or may not have been a term of endearment abbreviated from Katherine. As the Legislator was not married it may be perhaps argued that he had a sister of that name or possibly an Aunt. . . . Stirling felt that he could have dealt more cheerfully and gustoically with the situation, and the Legislator, in his unregenerate undergraduate days, when neither Birthdays nor Bump Suppers were absolutely unknown. . . . Still, he certainly said, " *You're* all right, Ginger, come and have a drink," as he led him towards the bedroom—which was not bad for a parson.

But William Tom was not to be had with *that* sort of nonsense.

" Loogere, ole Cock," quoth he, " You're drung Thass worrer madder wi' you. And iss 'graceful thing in clergilum too. 'Sno goo' sayin' you'rer norfan—'cos Inoberrer. I' yer longloss farver. Thass proof possletive! Don' it? . . . Worrerbout my speesh, eh? Ain' it time er go? I gotter make speech lodderlil

silly kids. . . . Lessave nother dring! No, I *ainter* comin' (hic) longer you in there, an' it ain' no bed-time neether. . . . Wan' a clip 'n the yeerole?" and William Tom again waxed truculent, and refused to be led from the verandah towards the room sacred to his use as a bed-chamber.

"Better make the beast quite drunk, I think," said Stirling, "and then put him to bed."

"Yus!" hiccupped Mr. Claney, "make liddle beas' qui' drung. 'Ere, Fatty!"—addressing Muirhead-Carne—"gennilum says you gotter ge'qui' drung. . . . You're *'arf* drung now," he added censoriously.

"I can't let him go out of the house in this state," said Stirling, "and it would be a shameful thing to let him go near a school, apart from the fact that Harris would throw him down the stairs, and assault me next time we met."

"What's to be done?" asked Muirhead-Carne.

"Well, I vote we knock him down, bind him, and put him on his bed—unless the idea of making him a little drunker appeals to you."

And so the Legislator, whose life had been devoted to freedom's cause, and who had never been bound by duty, obligation, or sense of decency, came within an ace of being bound with material bonds on two almost consecutive days. And all the while labouring for the spread of light, sweetness, emancipation, and freedom!

But he could never "carry his liquor," and, even as Stirling spoke, a song anent an aged monk tailed off into a murmur and a snore, and the gentle Demagogue slept—and only awoke once before dinner-time—to be violently and comprehensively unwell.

The Principal, Staff, and Members of the Husseinabad Government High School were notified that the

Member for Jewsditch was ill, and could not give himself the pleasure of addressing them as he had intended, and Harris, greatly relieved and pleased, dismissed the school.

On his way home, Harris called to inquire as to the nature of the Statesman's illness, and to have another "buck" with his old College chum.

"Dead drunk, my child," said Stirling. "When I came in, that little swine, Muirhead-Carne, was urging him to drink brandy, and it appears he has been drinking beer all day. He's a teetotaller too."

"First good turn M.-C. ever did me," replied Harris. "I had fully made up my mind that if Claney said one single disloyal word or made one disrespectful remark about the King, I would order him to stop, and if he did it again I would run him to the door and take a drop kick at his southern extremity as he reached the top of the stairs. The position and importance of a Claney is not understood in India. People here think he is a sort of Member of Council, only more so, and also that he speaks for the British Nation. . . . He'd have undone all I've done, and utterly unsettled the minds of all who understood him. I'm half sorry in one way that it didn't come off though. The position and importance of a person who is run out of a room by the scruff of his neck and then kicked down the steps *is* understood in India."

"Well, perhaps it's as well as it is, and you have excellent reason for refusing if he wishes to come to-morrow. I think that when you have been courteous, and have made all preparations for the reception of a person who goes and gets blind drunk instead of coming—you can safely 'have the honour to regret your inability,' etc."

"Yes, I think I'll keep him out now. Where *is* the dear?"

"In that room. I heard sounds of terrible upheaval, just now, but he appears to be asleep again. Hope he won't come to dinner."

"Not he," said Harris. "And his breakfast will be 'arf a pint o' mild,' I expect."

"I hope he'll resume his wanderings after it, even if he goes in my clothes disguised as a chaplain, 'Claney and *suit*' on tour. Come and share my frugal dinner, as he is not likely to bother us."

"Right O! But I must get to bed early. I was up all last night. I'll go and have a couple of hours' nap before I change."

"Eight-thirty then."

. . . . . .

On his way to his bungalow Harris passed two *sanyasis*, arrayed in salmon-coloured gaberdines and long necklaces of large praying-beads.

"I hope it will be a good portrait, my brother," said one to the other. "Think of the millions who will purchase it and worship the picture of the hero avenger, who slew an enemy of the Great Mother."

CHAPTER XV

"LA VIE EST VAINE"

"I COULD never explode the terrible thing with opened eyes," said Dagga; "as I press upon this little part that looses the thunder and the bolt, I *must* shut them. . . . I can shed the blood of the enemy of India, who is also the enemy of my more than brother, and upon his blood I can gloat—but I

could not hold this engine up, take aim with open eyes, and keep them open as I pull the handle."

"Then let the mouth touch the back of him to whom it speaks, and it matters not. But if you stand afar off, and, pointing it, shut your eyes and explode—you go to gaol, and with the deed undone," replied Dé.

"The mouth shall touch his back, and, as it touches, suddenly I pull."

"And, so long as you hold back the little handle, the messages pour forth. It is the virtue of this automatic pistol that the user can pull and release the handle, firing but one stroke, if one suffice, or he can hold it back and eight blows are struck in rapid succession, as you have seen. Or, having delivered two or three or four, the firer can withhold the rest. . . . Fire all—hold back the handle until the pistol has done its worst."

"Nay, my brother," said Dagga, with an enigmatic smile, "when six messengers have carried thy greeting to his evil heart, I shall have earned thy thanks—and I shall then strive to deserve still greater." . . .

What meant the meandering fool? Anyhow, six shots at point-blank range should settle Stirling's business. Was he going to reserve two for his own suicide, or for self-defence if seized as he endeavoured to escape? If the former, so much the better. The case then began and ended there—simply the murder of a European by a fanatic who then committed suicide. If he escaped, the hue and cry would soon be out, and the police were certainly suspicious of the temple and its visitors. He must warn Dagga against returning to the temple if seen near the house and possibly suspected. Should he see Dagga start upon his errand, disguise himself, and disappear? Nothing

simpler than to go to the station dressed as a Goanese cook, as a syce, as a coolie, as a babu, as an Indian Gentleman, or as any one of a dozen other common wayfarers, take a ticket to a place a few hundred miles away, and change at some junction, or get out at a wayside shanty and be swallowed up again among the millions of India.

But to see it done! To see the man who had flogged him wallowing in his blood, gasping out his life, fighting for breath, and knowing to whom he owed his death; knowing that the promised vengeance had at last overtaken him, and that, thousands of miles from where it was incurred. He hoped the wretch might linger for days—linger long enough to tell his friends of the terrible, unquenchable, inevitable Vengeance that had tracked him and overtaken him long after it had been earned, and at the other side of the world. . . . If he could only get at him and mock him as he lay dying in agony! . . . If he could only creep at dead of night into his chamber and thrust his fingers into his wounds and torture and taunt him until he died quivering and shrieking!

Oh, he *must* see it done, or all his life he would regret it bitterly. . . . But the danger! . . . If the fool were caught in the act, or as he fled, or if he were seen by some servant, or if the *paggi* tracked him to the temple! . . . Dé wanted no more gaol. . . . The food was excellent and plentiful, the treatment was good, one wanted for nothing—but there was *work*! . . . No, there must be no more gaol. . . . Perhaps Dagga *did* mean suicide. . . . He had talked much of the Key of the Golden Gate of Freedom of late. . . . That would be the really perfect solution—for Dagga to kill Dé's hated enemy before Dé's eyes, and then

to kill himself. So long as Dagga and not Dé killed him, there was no fear of the gallows for the latter, and if Dagga committed suicide there was no fear of the gaol for Dé—for his being an accessory before the fact.

"My brother," said he, "the world is a weary place, and the portion of the best of us is but trouble. Do you not long for peace, rest, sleep, nothingness, Nirvana, and perfect Annihilation?"

"My more than brother, I yearn for it. Words would fail me if I spoke for a thousand years to say how I long for the commencement of the undying, eternal, and dreamless sleep."

"And I! We two are of the same mind, as ever."

"Have patience, Rose of the Desert of my Heart! Have patience for but a little while."

The Rose of the Desert of Dagga's Heart continued: "Why wander we on through the Valley of Woe of life? I know not. Is there any Pleasure? There is none. Dust and Ashes in the mouth there are and nought else. Said the Yahoudi King in his haste, 'All men are liars'? Why said he not 'All men are fools' at his leisure? For all men *are* fools or they would not be men. They would be Sleepers. Only the fool lives, assuredly! All wise men die as soon as they learn they will be happier dead. Who bears a burden he can cast down? The Fool. Who continues the life he can cease? The Fool. My brother, are we to be fools much longer?"

"Not much longer, Fount of Wisdom. How I wish I had hearkened to your words when first you said to me, 'Fall asleep with the knowledge of one splendid deed, one glorious moment, and one perfect pleasure. Then sleep for ever where the weary are at rest.' Had I done

so then, I had been spared the bitter cruel humiliation and wrong of rejection from the service of the Government, and the years of wretched brooding on the cruel fate that was written on my forehead. In an inauspicious moment was I born. Yea, and they only made that law as to the riding of horses in order to keep out Indians! Why should a district officer ride a horse? Is it not more dignified and seemly to ride upon the necks of men? Is not the palanquin a fitter conveyance for a ruler and judge? But why do I say again what I have said a thousand times? To-night ends all, and glad am I that in my going I make thee happy. Aye, my brother, I will make thee doubly happy—I will make thee happy for always."

"True friend and great Hero! His death will indeed make me happy while I draw the breath of life," replied Dé.

Dagga smiled the enigmatic smile again.

"Forget not the words, I implore you," continued Dé;

"Trust in me. As I pull the handle I will hiss into his ear: 'Stirling! Remember Hari Dé! *Revenge!*'"

"The very words. But shoot as you speak. He is a bull for strength and activity."

"Ha! We will take note of his strength and activity when the six words of the pistol are spoken."

"Would that I could then strike him as he struck me when *I* lay defenceless before *him*," growled Dé. "But come. We will approach the house by different routes, reaching it at dark. We will hide near by, thou in the shrubbery of the compound, and I between the bushes and the wall, beside the house, for I must see the brave and glorious deed of my *chela*."

"Aye, my *guru*! Leave not the spot we marked until I come to thee. Swear not to move!"

"Fear not. I shall watch thy deed—*and what follows.*"

Most excellent! The fool would crouch in the bushes by the porch and when Stirling came into the verandah to sit and smoke, or, failing that, came out at Dagga's shout of "Mr. Stirling, Sir, may I speak to you a moment," he would watch the murder—which would follow when the man turned his back.

And then he would see the suicide and depart in peace.

"Suppose he should be out," said Dagga, "we will wait on until he *does* return. And if he be in the house and come not into the verandah at my shout, I will enter and shoot him as he sleeps at night. He *shall* die."

"Well spoken, my hero. And, if you falter, think of the photograph which will appear in all the papers, and make you famous throughout all Hindustan! . . . But he is certain to come into the verandah, if not into the garden, in the course of the evening. . . . Go thou in the direction from the town, and then turn to the left and cross the railway, thus approaching the house from the other side. I will go to the right by way of the canal and shall reach the house at eight o'clock. Thou wilt be first—but await me. I would see the deed."

"Assuredly I shall await thee, my brother," replied Dagga, and the worthies parted, the last speaker carrying a loaded automatic pistol beneath his voluminous salmon-pink robe.

Hari Vidyabhusana Dé strolled placidly toward the canal, a sinister figure in the soft light of the setting

sun, and mused as he went, upon the strange freak of fortune that had put his enemy in his power. . . . Surely this was more than coincidence! . . . Could it be that there really *were* gods, and that one of them, propitiated by Dé and wroth at the foreign priest, had compassed this? . . . Who would have dreamed that Stirling would ever have come to India? And having come to India should have been the very man to be sent to act for the disabled Chaplain of Husseinabad—disabled in effect by Dé himself, since Dé had suggested the tying of a rope across the conveniently-placed high gateposts at the entrance to the long carriage drive, into which his horse always cantered briskly, on the Tuesday night which was known to be his regular late night. . . . Think of it! Stirling, his arch-enemy, unwittingly brought to the very place in which Dé was, with his dangerous pùppet, by Dé's own act. . . . Surely no coincidence. . . . Ha! To see the ruffian weltering in his life-blood! . . . How he hoped he would not die too quickly!

A woman was drawing water at the well in the clump of palms and cactus near the path. Dé caught sight of her and recognized her ere she could draw her *sari* across her face. He turned quickly towards the little oasis.

"And so thou hast condemned both man and manling, hast thou, wretch?" said he. "Husband and son must sicken as this moon wanes and die with the new moon—and all because thou must disobey the will of the gods and the order of their priest!"

The woman fell moaning at his feet: "Master, I cannot—and if I would, *he* is there. How should I leave the house?"

"*How*, fool? That is thy concern. Poison him, for aught I care, and so at least save thy son. For look you—if you are not at this spot as the Great Gun fires at nine hours and a half this night, son and husband surely die. And hearken, *Widow*; ghosts of the dead shall attend thee each night of thy life—and walking before thee with twisted backward-pointing feet shall at last lead thee to—Ugh!—a death too terrible for me to tell."

The wretched woman beat her forehead on the ground as she shuddered and shook in terror.

"Master, if I arose and came forth, would *he* not think me mad and hold me—beat me, and lock me in! How *can* I come?"

"He will not be there. I will bid him be at the temple as the Great Gun fires. And then if you fail me . . . even I, whom you have offended, will pity you."

"Master, I must be gone!"

"Where is thy man?"

"He smokes at the door of the hut."

"'Tis well. At nine and a half hours to-night I shall be at this spot, and if not to-night—why then to-morrow night."

(But he was not, although the trembling, weeping, terrified woman was, until, in a sudden access of mingled rage, grief, shame and fright, she cast herself into the well.)

Going on to the hut, he struck an attitude as the cultivator respectfully salaamed.

"Bring me water," said he.

The man entered the hut and returned with a brass vessel of water. Over it the Holy Man made a pass and—behold!—a devil in the form of a tiny

white ball rushed about it breathing fire and smoke!

The labourer fell upon his knees and hid his face. "Fear not," said the Holy Man. "It is a sign, and, the sun being not yet set, it portendeth good. I will read the stars this night and tell thee all. Bring this water with the utmost care, and without the spilling of one drop, to the temple this evening before the Great Gun fires, and stir not till I come to thee. . . . Make a good offering to the gods and great good fortune awaits thee. If I come not at midnight—come thou at gun-fire to-morrow night."

The cowering dupe thanked the Holy Man and begged his intercession with the gods.

"Propitiate them well, then," replied the "priest" as he turned away. . . .

What should he do, Dagga being safely dead? Go to Karabad or continue the work with the Twentieth Punjabis—or was that getting a little too dangerous since the Mussulman swine of a Subadar Major had warned him off—with evil words and a kick. . . . Should he take to the road again? . . . Should he go right off to Karachi, Bombay, Poona, Calcutta or Lahore? . . . Should he offer himself to the Central Committee as a "missionary" to Madras? What about Ceylon or Burma? . . . Or should he seek out this noble-hearted deliverer, Mr. Claney—who, he had heard, had come to Karabad, since he himself last visited it—and put himself at his disposal? . . . Well, let Dagga die first and then he would act as impulse dictated or prudence warned. . . .

From his position between the bushes and the side wall of the compound he had an excellent view of the

well-lit porch and verandah, a few yards from which crouched Dagga, shaking and shivering in an ecstasy of excitement and fear.

Was Stirling in the bungalow? Would he come and sit in the verandah and smoke his pipe? Would he come out and stroll in the garden beneath the glorious moon—now nearly at the full? If not, would he come out if Dagga called to him, and would Dagga's nerve fail him at the last moment if he had to stand face to face with the man? It was a cruelly difficult thing to meet grey eyes bent straight upon you. Why did Englishmen always stare you straight in the face—and why did brown eyes always find it so hard to meet the grey or blue?

Hark! A door banged open and some one yawned noisily and grunted "Ugh!" . . . And Dagga rose and crept up to a pillar of the porch.

William Tom Claney, Esquire, said "Ugh!" again, and Dagga crept a little nearer to the figure in clerical garb that stood facing the outer darkness of shadow in which he crouched. . . . *Let him turn his back!*

William Tom was feeling worse than ever! Lor'! What *had* 'appened to him? He must 'a bin on the booze, an' no mistake! An' wot about Stirling an' Muirhead-Carne and that bloomin' school? He mus' have another drink, whether or no.

"Boy," he called, and Tulsiram Butler stepped out from the dining-room where he was putting the final touches to the dinner-table.

"Got 'ny whisky-an-soda?"

"Ha, Sahib."

"Then bring it here."

It quickly materialized and the quite demoralized Pride of Jewsditch proceeded to drown sorrow and

drive away dull care, as he sat in a long chair with the decanter on a small table beside him.

What a fine ole head he *had* got! Never mind, soon wash it away. Ha! ha! rather good that. Put a bit of ice on it too. Fancy bringin' a little pail of ice every time they brought you a drink. Start that game at home he would. Get some ice from the fishmonger's and make the skivvy bring it in with the drinks when a pal dropped in. Wouldn' he open his eyes! Then to say in a sooperior sorter way, "Allus done in-hic-the best circles."

Drink O! and damn who knows. Goin' home ter-morrer an' thunderin' goo' job. Wish he'd never seen the bloomin' country at all. . . . Bloomin' hot. . . . Have another drink and then a mooch round in the moo'-light. Looked nice an' cool out there. One more drink first. One two an' a liddle one! he! he! Now for a-hic-liddle mooch. Migh' be a real good ole pub ou' ther-hic-ither-ither-hic-ither-mooli'! Fancy findin' real liddle-hic-pub. Wheresh shtep. Shtep gwup or shtep go down?"

The last words of Great Men are always of a melancholy, if sentimental, interest to posterity. Those of this Statesman were actually sung, swanlike, and were

> We all got blue blin' paralytig' drung,
> When 'e ole *Dun Cow* caugh' fire.

Dé, wondering what all this meant and who could be singing drunkenly in the verandah screened from his view, saw Dagga edge round the massive stucco pillar and then leap at the back of a man who lurched out into the carriage drive.

As Claney recovered his balance after the descent of the three steps, a voice hissed in his ear "Stirling!

Remember Hari Dé! *Revenge!*" and a perfect fusillade rang out as Dagga pressed the automatic pistol to his victim's body and held back the trigger.

Unable to restrain his over-mastering impulse to see his enemy die, to gloat and to mock, Dé sprang forward, ran crouching through the bushes, reached and peered round the nearest pillar of the porch, saw, and violently smote his forehead.

"Fool!" he hissed, "*that is not Stirling.*" But even as he spoke Dagga spoke also, shouted triumphantly rather, and heard not Dé's words.

"My brother," he cried, "the hour has come. I give thee *Nirvana*," and, as he spoke, shot Dé through the chest.

"Fall asleep, my brother," he continued, as the other dropped with a scream, "with the knowledge of one splendid deed done for thee by thy *chela*, and the glorious satisfaction of revenge. Sleep for ever where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. I join thee." And he placed the muzzle of the pistol between his teeth and fired the last shot.

"Boy," called Stirling from his dressing-room, "Go and see who that is letting off crackers in the compound."

Harris, cycling into the compound at that moment, ran over a cobra and broke its back. As he went into the porch, intent on getting a stick wherewith to finish the snake, he saw the three corpses. He returned and killed the cobra unperturbed and then called to Stirling:—

"Bobby, my son, been shooting lately?"

"Yes," replied his friend, not understanding the point of the question.

"Well, I have added a cobra to the bag. I call one

seditious M.P., two automatic-pistol *sanyasis*, and a cobra, a good mixed bag. And yet I don't know that it really *is* mixed after all. Same species if of different plumage and note."

CHAPTER XVI

FROM THE SOLDIER TO THE BISHOP

THE Vice was in trouble; worse, he was in gaol —in the bathroom. In durance vile he meditated Sin, Sorrow, Punishment, the Unruly Member, and the utter unreliability of the British Soldier as a Guide to Polite Conversation and Choice Expression.

For the Vice had said a Word. A very dreadful Word. And he had already been warned against the use of the Word, having sullied the ears of Buster, Snooty, Jerks, and Birdie, subalterns all, therewith, and been warned and forgiven.

It was really the fault of Private Jones and Original Sin.

Private Jones said the Word and Original Sin caused the Word to appear savoury and sweet in the ears of the Vice.

It fell out thus. On a day, as the tropic sun sank reluctant into the Western Sea, the President, the Vice, Venus the Bull-dog, Ayah, Mowlah, who, of course, was the boy who looked after Jock—sometimes a long way after; Abdullah, Widdy the Second, that cocky and affected Persian cat—rather inclined to be 'normous; and Bessie the Principal Doll, were taking the air and stock of all things bright and beautiful or otherwise.

The President bestrode Jock, the sturdy little Arab

pony, and the Vice rode in a vehicle like an enlarged and glorified porter's trolley, when it did not seem good unto him to walk, accompanied by Widdy and Bessie. And to them appeared beneath a most graceful feathery tuft of bamboos a dying kitten, hunted, tortured, blinded, mangled, by a gang of those foul, impudent, thievish, useful cads—Indian crows.

The beautiful pale little face of the President went a shade paler, the great grey eyes became a trifle greater, and the sweet little mouth took on an unwonted straightness as she urged Jock to a gallop and dashed at the hopping, pecking, jeering, cawing tormentors.

"Oh! Look at the poor little tiny darling," she cried, and jumped down to pick it up. But it was past picking up by fastidious hands and cuddling to an immaculate frock—or so Ayah thought.

The Vice shook a fat fist at the crows and asked them just to wait until he came with his double-barrelled, central-fire, hammerless, ejector gun.

The crows laughed aloud.

And by came Private Jones of the King's Own Mid-Kent Rifle Regiment and beheld the tragic sight.

Private Jones was not one of Nature's Noblemen. Beneath a humble khaki tunic did not beat a heart of gold filled with hatred of all wrong and infamy, but he was always honestly indignant at acts of needless cruelty—perpetrated by others. On his own cruelties he looked with lenient eye and broad forgiving spirit.

"Pore little——" but no. We must bowdlerise or be coarse, a hard alternative. We will bowdlerise, but not paraphrase Private Jones.

"Pore little beggar," echoed the Vice. But the last word of the echo was not "beggar."

Private Jones looked at the Vice with a startled

expression, and ejaculating a brief orison to the effect that the Deity might love him, he resumed his walk.

Thus the seed was sown that grew into the fateful tree of evil, of which the Vice's downfall and incarceration was the bitter fruit.

For the President the day was spoilt, tainted with blood, murder, brutality, and horror.

Mowlah she dispatched hot-foot to Lieutenant-Colonel O'Cloghry, of the Indian Medical Service and Civil Surgeon of Karabad—best and kindest of splendid doctors, with the dying kitten and a request from the United Junior Curlton that he would operate at once and give it a bed in the Civil Hospital. And Mowlah duly fled round a bend in the road and threw it down a well, where doubtless it played its humble part in providing the "writing on the forehead" which, in the fullness of time, showed the dwellers around that they had offended one of their many and touchy godlings once again, and provoked the gift of sudden death.

For the Vice the day was not wholly clouded and ruined. He had a new word, and he liked new words. This too was a satisfying word and a forceful. He felt it was impressive and expressive. Anon he found its use depressive, its hearers repressive.

On their return to the Club, comfort and balm exuded from a sympathetic Buster who proved that the kitten felt nothing after the first assault and, in a day or two, would not give the matter a thought.

Probably he was right.

Further, he swept the matter into oblivion by a most glorious proposal. Nothing less than a hawking expedition to the lake. Provided Mummy consented, Buster would come for them at six in the morning

and drive them to the appointed spot where Jerks, Snooty, and Birdie would be waiting, and take them to where they could see Birdie's new hawks tried.

Mummy saw no objection, provided they were not exposed to the sun and were home to early breakfast.

To Buster, Mummy said: "But you really must tell the boys to temper the wind of conversation to the shorn lambs, and to walk delicately in speech. It is a continual source of wonder to me how children unerringly and inevitably pick up the wayward and wanton word, and disregard the righteous and beautiful. Bill might mutter a little prayer a hundred times without their taking the slightest notice, but so surely as a tiny lapse from the strait and narrow path of seemly sweetness mars his chaste diction, they are on to it like good terriers on to a rat."

"Fallen Human Nature, dear lady. You don't want a cock and hen pair of angels; now do you?"

"No, but it is apt to be embarrassing. The General's stately and most Proper Maiden Aunt was at tea yesterday, and, as I turned from welcoming somebody else, I was subconsciously aware of the tail end of a conversation between her and Boodle, which closed abruptly with the words:—

"'How very remarkable! And what did Daddy say to that?'

"'Daddy said "Damn nuisance!"'

"I tried to drown it with a cough. It could swim—well."

"Poor Mrs. Burgoyne! The silly old thing might have known that is just what Bill or any other decent son of Adam *would* say if he sat on the bread and butter when someone had put it on his chair while his back was turned. . . . Anyhow, I'll speak to the other fellows

and we won't use a single slang expression or say more than 'Oh dear!' if we lose our best hawk." . . .

"Isn't Buster a great bird," murmured the Vice, who was to be sedulously guarded from slang, to the President that night.

"He's a Nut and a real Stout Fella," replied the equally-to-be-sheltered President.

At four o'clock next morning a tiny, quaint, pyjamaed figure slipped from the mosquito-curtained cot and made its way in the bitter-cold darkness to where Ayah snored on her mat by the door, completely enveloped in a sheet against devils, ghosts, spirits, ghouls, fiends, sprites, *bhutts*, *djinns*, *afrits*, and every other variety of nocturnal visitant given to troubling the night watches of virtuous nativedom.

"Awake, Woman," said he, in fluent vernacular, "and bring my tea. I go a-hunting."

Ayah sprang into wakefulness, speech, and an erect position at the first sound of the voice of the Chota Sahib.

"Nahin, Ficcie Baba," said she, catching him up and hurrying to the warm cot, "Nahin, Chota Sahib, it is still but yesterday and not to-morrow. Why, the very crows are still in bed, and even the wind has not yet awakened. Ayah will bring the Little Master's tea in good time and have him and Missie Baba ready when Borlaysh Sahib comes. See how quietly Boodle Baba sleeps. Sleep again, my Princeling."

"Well, I drump," replied the Vice, relapsing into his own language.

"What is '*drump*'?" inquired Ayah, in hers.

"Why, drump a dream, of course, Foolish One," was the reply. "Do you not understand Sahib's talk? I drump I was too late and Buster Sahib went without

me. It would have been your fault if it had been tru
and I should have been obliged to kill you with a knif
or a chopper or something. I do not *wish* to have t
kill you, or your husband will starve and be unable t
fly kites and play cards any more. So do not be late
And I wish that that White Sahib would not come
He came before I went to sleep and he made me fee
all cold, but I said, ' Hullo, Old Waxworks,' like Daddy
told me to, but I don't like him. Then he came when
I woke up, after I had drump, and I was looking t
see if it was getting light. He was like a kind of light
himself, and then he went out like a lamp when I
got off the bed. He's like a magic lantern what has
resolving views."

" Chota Sahib talking fever talk," said Ayah in
English. " Chota Sahib eating too much mangoes,
having pain in tummy, getting fever, doctor coming,
giving nasty medicine, Ficcie going to bed."

" Peace," replied the Vice, and addressed himself t
slumber.

At six of a glorious morning, Buster's very high dog-
cart, attached to the Maid-of-all-work, dashed up the
drive and halted at the very door of the Junior Curlton
Club, to the obvious annoyance of the Maid, who
invented a new dance on the spot. The Maid was a
fiery Arab stallion, whose name of Maid-of-all-work
was due to his unvarying willingness and ability to
hunt, race, hack, trap, play polo, carry a lady, and
stand fast, while his rider went off on foot after a
chance-encountered family of grouse, partridge, or
duck, when " taking his gun for a ride " as he often did
before breakfast.

Ere the dance was satisfactorily completed, emerged
the President and Vice, each clad in a curious combin-

tion of mushroom-like sun-topis, fur coats, thick leggings, and woollen gloves.

"Give me a boost, O Ayah," said the junior official when the President had climbed up, daring man or woman to help her in any way—adding, "I did not say a *bunk*," as the long-suffering woman fairly lifted him on to the upper step. "You really don't know much Sahib's talk. When I say a boost I mean a boost, and when I say a bunk I mean a bunk."

"The error was mine, Master," replied the woman. "Let the Presence forgive."

But the Presence was hard and haughty, being troubled about many things, chief of which was the frequent appearance of the silent, melancholy-looking White Sahib, who had the curious faculty of making one feel cold and prickly all over and who was positively transparent when in the act of taking his departure.

However, all thoughts of the White Sahib and other dubious and distasteful matters quickly fled before the united influences of sunshine, keen cold air, a spanking trot, and Buster's wholly comprehensible and sympathetic conversation.

In a few minutes the town was behind the wayfarers, and to all appearances they were far from the haunts of men.

A fairly hard and level sandy track led off into the heart of the wilderness, and, as far as the eye could reach, nothing was to be seen but brown earth, boulder, and rock, olive-green cactus, and stunted palm, save where, towards the horizon, foot-hills grew and rose and swelled, wave upon wave, higher and higher, until, forming the horizon itself, they became great mountains bare, grim, inimical, menacing.

Before long, the dog-cart overtook a cavalcade that

reminded both children of a picture in their beloved and invaluable portfolio of Pictures from English History, although the members thereof looked remarkably modern.

First came Birdie mounted on a fat and steady pony and bearing a hooded hawk upon his wrist. Birdie was arrayed in a dark green canvas jacket the worse for wear, tear, and gun-oil; khaki shorts, putties, and hob-nailed boots. The sun-burnt knees of Birdie were bare, and his head was covered with a very large khaki-coloured *topi* adorned with a hawk's foot, a mallard's tail, and an assortment of curious feathers.

On foot marched Snooty, somewhat similarly geared, but having a tweed shooting-jacket with leather pads at shoulder and elbow. He carried a shot-gun.

Jerks bestrode a most malodorous camel and talked to it very unkindly. He wore what had been a khaki uniform. He also bore a hawk upon his wrist.

The Maid evinced the strongest possible distaste for the camel, and Jerks was invited to "remove his humming-bird" while the dog-cart came to an anchor for the inspection by the children of the new hawk. Birdie removed its hood, and its great, hard, shallow-looking eyes gazed about without a blink.

"May I stroke it, Birdie?" asked Boodle.

Answer in the emphatic negative. Hungry hawks are not to be tempted with little pink fingers.

"Don't get too near the pool, Buster," said Birdie, "and any small boy who moves or speaks before the hawk is up, will be strangled to encourage the rest."

"Don't you worry. . . . We've never been hawking before, but we know all about it, don't we, Mr. Vice? If these Young Officers are as quiet as we are, they'll do well. What?"

The dog-cart drove on, and in about a quarter of an hour stopped near a low hill, after traversing a mile of soft level sandy soil in which the Maid's hoofs made no sound.

"Now, don't breathe for the next ten minutes," said Buster, as he lifted his charges out of the cart, "and creep like the reddest of red Indians. We're stalking the foe."

And the children, each holding a hand of Buster, stalked the foe, with many a halt for reconnaissance.

Anon, they reached the summit of the little hill, and, with redoubled precautions, crept across its top, taking cover behind cactus, boulders, lye-bushes, and stunted palms.

"Hist!" said Buster, and they histed.

"On thy tummies shalt thou go," and on their tummies they went.

Wriggling, they reached the edge and discovered that they were looking down upon a pool which was joined to, or separated from, the lake by a stretch of mud, and there, a couple of hundred yards away, lay upon the bosom of the pool an innocent, unsuspecting, happy family of wild-duck.

"Sound asleep at this time of day, the lazy frowsters," whispered Buster. "See what comes of sluggabedding. They'll be woke up shortly."

And Boodle quoted a Wise Saw of Buster's own, ere witnessing the Modern Instance:—

> "Early to bed and early to rise
> Is the way to make people say
> *He's* got no flies."

"There are Birdie and Snooty and Jerks," she continued, "all walking."

"Yes. Now you both watch with both eyes and

two ears and you'll have a duck for dinner to-night."

They obeyed and saw the new hawk acquit himself right well.

Nearer and nearer crept the three subalterns, crouching low, while, from time to time, Birdie would slowly and cautiously raise his head and take a look through his field-glasses.

Nearer and nearer they came to the sleeping ducks until at last they were not fifty yards away.

Then Birdie unhooded the hawk, held him aloft, and then threw him up. Round and round he flew in circles, appeared to see the ducks suddenly, and then began to rise.

The ducks awoke as though by instinct, and quacked loudly, but made no attempt to escape.

In upward-sweeping circles the hawk soared to the sky, reached what seemed unto him a satisfactory altitude, and hung poised, motionless, ready.

Birdie produced a whistle, blew a long, clear note, and all three men, rising together, rushed, yelling, towards the pool.

The frightened foolish ducks rose and flew in the direction of the lake.

The hawk literally fell from the sky like a stone, and its course, after dropping perpendicularly for hundreds of feet, took on a curve, and, with a skill that is inexplicable and marvellous, the bird so guided its meteor swoop upon the duck, that, in full career, its victim in full flight and with ever-changing position, it struck it dead—as though shot with a bullet.

And the ranks of the Junior Curlton could scarce forbear to cheer. But, even as he started to run in, Jerks, threw up his hawk, and that astute bird, unable to attain swooping height, made a pounce from a moderate

elevation upon a belated straggler who only rose as his leader fell in death. The hawk descended with comparative slowness, the duck dodged and returned to the water, where he was perfectly safe so far as the hawk was concerned. Knowing this, the latter sought a bush on the bank near the children, and bided his time. The duck would have to go sooner or later.

The victim of the first hawk fell beside the water, and his destroyer was upon him, rending and tearing, almost as soon as his body touched ground.

By the time Buster and the children reached the fatal spot the hawk had been taken from his prey, and both consoled and rewarded with a piece of raw meat, at which he tore ravenously.

The Vice contemplated the slain duck, a fine drake in point of fact, and, as the whole party gathered round it, he observed, in the manner of Private Jones of the King's Own Mid-Kent Rifle Regiment, "Poor little beggar!" but, alas, the ultimate word was not beggar. A simultaneous shout of horror burst from the outraged subalterns, and Jerks, covering his shocked ears, fled from that unhallowed spot, while Birdie fell upon his back, and with hob-nailed boots waving in the air, called in a faint voice for his mother.

Buster, when sufficiently recovered, remarked:—

"And you are the young gentleman whom I promised to shelter from every breeze of vulgarity, and cherish in the front garden of good-seemliness. O! my kind Aunt in tights!"

"I like that word," said the Vice stoutly. "I heard a soldier thay it, about a poor little kitty. What *are* tights."

"And now he blames the British Army and roundly accuses a Thin Red Hero of using it. Horrible and

horrid," said Jerks, who had timidly returned, after going through curious contortions, almost as though he were convulsed with laughter.

And then they solemnly and seriously told him what a coarse word it was, wherewith he had sullied and assailed their polite and fair young ears and shocked their gentle minds. Strongly they dissuaded him from its use and gladly they accepted his definite promise never again to resort to it under any provocation whatsoever. But the flesh is weak and the spirit wandering, and the Vice used the word once again, forgetting its heinousness and his promise. He used it in terribly inappropriate company too, and caused several good gentlemen to become purple in the face almost as if from suppressed laughter, though that, of course, could not have been the case.

It happened thus. There was a dinner-party toward, and the Bishop of Bendras was present.

"You appear to have broken the absurd spell that idle gossip has woven around this excellent, if a little unfortunate house, my friend. I need not ask whether a robust-minded person like yourself has ever 'seen a ghost' here," said he mellifluously.

"No," replied Daddy, "I have never seen a ghost here. Nor has my wife. I should greatly like to see a ghost."

"Well, I fear your desire will never be gratified," said the Bishop, "for no such thing as a ghost exists, or ever did, or will."

It will be noted that he was a sane and sober man.

"Nor witches either, Bishop?" asked his partner, a gentle, demure, shy lady, who was shortly afterwards divorced.

"Nor witches either," he answered.

"Then what about the Witch of Endor and Solomon's ghost? Or was it Saul's?" said the dame triumphantly. "Which is right, Bible or Bishop?"

"In the modern and vulgar acceptance of the term," began the Prelate, "there is no such thing as a ghost, but of course . . ."

And, sad to say, the remainder of the homily was lost for ever, because, at that moment, into the room dashed a tiny pyjama-clad figure shrieking, "Here he is, Daddy! Come quick! I thaid it, and then I bunked for you!" . . .

Daddy sprang to his feet and caught up the child in his arms. "All right, Sonny, we'll go and have a chat with him in a minute. Have some fruit or lemonade or something. Here! Boy, *limbu-pani lao, Chota-Sahib ki waste.*"

"He's had a nightmare," said the Bishop.

"Precisely," said Daddy.

"And what was it you said to him before you came for Father," continued the Dignitary.

"'Hullo, Old Waxworks! Thit down and have a drink,'" was the reply.

The Bishop looked puzzled, as well he might.

"And who was he?" he continued.

"A White Sahib," answered the child. "Looks like a deader."

"You've had a bad dream, little man," said His Lordship, "but you must never be afraid; I'll tell you a story."

"A gosplytroof one?" enquired the Vice suspiciously.

"Yes, perfectly true," answered William Bendras.

"There was once a boy whom I knew well, and he was proceeding along a somewhat sequestered and lonely

road after nightfall. Presently he approached a sign-post with two outstretched arms, which in the dark certainly possessed a somewhat mysterious and uncanny appearance."

The Vice yawned.

"It is such optical illusions that gave rise to these stupid ghost-stories. The boy, instead of advancing boldly, confronting the figure, and discovering it to be a useful humble friend, turned with a shriek of foolish terror and fled back along the road in an agony of fright until he met me, and fell, more dead than alive, at my feet. And what do you think I said to him?"

"'*Poor little beggar!*'" hazarded the Vice politely.

But the ultimate word was not beggar.

The Bishop survived the shock—but only for a few years.

CHAPTER XVII

"UN PEU DE RÊVE"

SO he might think about her now! He might hope and he might dream.

No—there was no room for Hope—he must be content to dream, and be thankful for the small mercy of being free to think about her.

It had been distinctly wrong to think about her while her husband was alive and his enemy. Her violent, neglectful, savage husband. No—mustn't say that of him. *Nil nisi bonum* now, poor chap!

Yes, he might think of her to his heart's content. No, his heart's discontent rather. He might think of her as "Sybil," too.

Of course, there was no room for Hope. She, well-

born, wealthy, accustomed to luxury and position as are flowers to sun and rain; dainty, admired, flattered, highly educated, gifted, accomplished—and he, well-born, poor, obscure, servant of a despised trade—a damned schoolmaster! Harris of the I.E.S.—Rs.600 a month! Still he could think of her now without offence—he could dream.

Where had he seen her first? Why, on horseback at the first meet of the Husseinabad Hounds after her husband had taken over the Mastership on his arrival as Deputy Commissioner.

He had admired her seat on the flea-bitten grey Arab, a fidgety, over-fed, under-worked beast, fitter for racing or polo than for hunting, under a side-saddle.

How pluckily she rode, and how unselfishly she pulled when other women were flogging and spurring for the brush.

Then, one day, only she, the Master, and he had finished after the record run of the Husseinabad pack, and she had spoken to him!

Had her eyes a greyish tint sometimes? It was difficult to be sure without seeming rude. What was it she had said: "We ought each to have a memento of this 'Jack,' I think," and he had giggled inanely and said: "Yes, you the brush; the Master, the mask; and I the pads." What a run that had been! Three in at the death, out of a field of twenty-nine, and a solid fifty minutes of it.

The meet had been at six by the Old Well. Perishing cold and pitch dark, hacking out. Then the tardy dawn and the mist through which palm groves loomed ghostly; the unloading of the hounds from the van by the light of hurricane lamps; the arrival by hooting motors of fur-clad sybarites declining to remove feet

from hot-water cases until it was positively time to mount; cries of "Who's this?" as hoof-beats were heard; objurgatory observations from Wallis the huntsman and the native kennel-men; the brave endeavours of plump little Black to climb on to his squealing, blue-eyed, man-eating country-bred; the horsey and doggy remarks of the knowing young man in pink whose equine experiences till a year ago were confined to the contemplation, from above, of the butt-ends of Manchester bus-horses.

And then She had come, and had glanced at him when looking over the thin "field."

As she had been "Not at Home" when he called, she did not know him. And, for the first time in his hunting experience, he had hoped hard, all the time, that no-one would meet with an accident.

First the master had drawn the river-bed and the hounds had put up a Jack and chopped him. Then he had whipped off and tried the sugar-cane clump, and the hounds had owned to a line in a minute or two. Then a settling of *topis*, a thrusting of feet well into stirrups, a two-hand grasp of the reins—and open country for ten miles ahead. How he had enjoyed that run! And how near he had kept to the pulling, fighting, flea-bitten grey—only just under control. Brute ought to have had a Ninth Lancer bit, with a woman up; and the running martingale was yards too long to be of the slightest use. Well, it was good going, and if the beast got the bit and his head, she'd only have to sit tight till he was tired. Country like a billiard table for the first mile. Hard earth with a top dressing of sand—perfect going. Then the "bunds" round some cultivation. Some horses hopping on and off; some flying them. Hers taking

them in great style. Then a brooklet with a three-foot bank—perpendicular—some flyers taking it clean, some heavy-weights plunging smack into the middle—only a foot of water and a rock bottom—some pulling up and turning off for a shelving bank or a narrower place. Then a ploughed field. Beastly going—and the hunt lost Major Fatty Templeton, seventeen stun, and his cast-for-age roarer.

Then a glorious scurry over "going" not to be beat in the Shires—and oh, Hell—a yawning, deep nullah. Is it throw your weight back, and pull for dear life, or shove in spurs and jump for ditto? Jump it is—you can only die once, and it isn't given to every poor devil to die in the hunting-field. What was it Father always used to say, "Take a high-jump steady, and a long-jump with the spurs home."

Heart missed a beat! But She is over with a yard to spare. Now for it. Hope the crumbling, rusted, worm-eaten, rotten saddle holds together. No time this for a busted girth or broken stirrup leather. Over! And not a dozen left in the field. Good old Jack, this is a punishing run. Stout-hearted little brute this pony is. Charger, trapper, polo, hack in both saddles, and perfect hunter. You can't get to the end of a thoroughbred Arab's tether. Keen as any hound or horseman out.

How curiously hollow the ground sounds here—like a drum, as the gallant remnant of thrusters gallop along. . . . This *is* life. . . . No one has lived who hasn't known it. Fancy a sober, solemn schoolmaster's inmost soul yelling, "Break your only horse's neck—break your own silly neck—but be in at the death!" That's it. "Jack's death or your own—be in at one of 'em."

Field tailing out. She, the Master, a flapper on her brother's big Waler charger, a lean, long, lathy cavalry-man on a horse like himself, and a Rich Man on "the best bit o' hoss-flesh money could buy me, Sir," and evilly entreating the beautiful animal. A beast, but a plucky beast is the Rich Man. Why is it that the real horse-loving born rider bestrides Rs.350 and fourth-hand, while the little fat Cockney "sportsman" flies along on Rs. 3500, born and bred and made for him?

Jove! The "Jack" is making for the hills! He's got to be pulled down before he gets there. What a speck he looks in front of the whitey, tawny-brown mass pouring along the ground behind him! If he reaches the hills he is safe, and if he holds a few minutes more, no one will see the death among those boulders, precipices, sliding shale heaps, and quarries.

A sunken road! That beastly picture, "The Sunken Road of Ohaine" was it? and the French Cuirassiers tumbling into it, flashes across one's mind—and She is a length in front—must pull out and risk messing the jump. Mustn't crowd. She is over like a bird. Now "Jim"—at it! Over! Good. *Crash!!* Oh! the poor little flapper! She is down. No, up again. "All right," she screams, but the big Waler doesn't budge. Wonder if brother knows she's out! A "field" of six and a perfect Field of Stones in front. Hullo! The Rich Man has had enough—or else his business instincts tell him to keep his Rs.3500 out of a very beach of boulders. This sloping smooth rock will do for a bit—but trot in the name of common humanity. Slither! *crash!* The cavalry-man has "side-slipped" and seems to be pinned under his horse. No—rolled clear—but saddle is off. Round

the spur of the hill and over the "pass," and an appalling haunch-slide down a kind of petrified waterfall. She is safely down. A wild gallop across a sort of grass-grown crater, a scramble up a sixty-degree slope with stirrup leathers along the horse's backbone nearly, a heave over—and—the hunt tearing to the edge of a precipice! Ahead forges Beauty and Bountiful tries to beat her—a leap—and—the gallant "Jack's" troubles are over in a second. Just in time!

But the pack won't "*Tear* him and *eat* him!" to the Master's cry.

"*Tear* him and *eat* him!" It is dead beat, and there isn't a hound on his feet. They lie gasping. The horses *drip* like eaves on a rainy day. They are all one colour—white—instead of respectively grey, bay, and chestnut. Their heads almost touch the ground. And as her husband took no notice of her, Harris went and helped her down, and, undoing the girths, bumped the saddle about, to restore circulation in the horse's back and save galls.

What a plucky ride for a woman—and she looked awfully tired!

He wouldn't have changed places with the Rich Man for his three thousand five hundred rupee hunter. No, nor with anyone in the world—save Dainton. . . .

Yes, that was the first time he had seen her, and the first time she had spoken to him.

The second time she had said anything to him was when the fog fell on the hunt and the hounds were lost. Yes, "*fell*" was the word. It was on the following Sunday and the meet had been at the standing Hunt Camp twenty miles out at Shelachi.

He had given "Jim" three days' rest, and had

saddled him at three in the morning and had ridden the twenty miles in two hours and joined the Hunt breakfast—or rather *chota hazri*.

How the Rich Man had openly envied his capacity to eat six eggs and six rashers of bacon at 5 a.m.

At six the hounds had been turned out and horses saddled—"Jim" being as fresh as any of them after a rub down.

As the hunt had moved off towards a dense clump of jungle that the Master intended to draw at daylight, Mrs. Dainton had said to him, "You ask a good deal of your pony, Mr. Harris," and he had replied, "I have never yet been able to ask him for more than he could do. I have to ride him home, too, directly after breakfast, however far we may go this morning."

"You seem to be a tough pair," she had answered, and then a lying youngster gave tongue, and the pack had to be beaten off a false scent and constrained to await fair daylight.

Before the sun was himself visible, the hunt was up, and after splashing and slipping and sliding through a bog by a sugar-cane plantation, was going across a fine breezy plain, thickly studded with twenty-foot cactus bushes. Soon these became so densely massed that the eye saw only a wall of green, though there was always a space of several feet between any two. Difficult galloping country and calling for much exercise of the graceful art of "bending." And then the fog literally *fell*. The hunt did not run into a fog-bank. The fog came down upon it from above, as a drop-scene falls on the stage and nearly as quickly!

He had been near Mrs. Dainton when it descended, and had called to her as soon as it was impossible to

see. She had called back, "Here I am," and he had joined her and strongly advised her to wait patiently until the fog lifted—reminding her of old wells, nullahs, sunken bullock-cart roads, precipices, and the steep-banked river.

And there for an hour they had sat like statues, he tongue-tied but happy—she intensely disgusted at the check. . . .

Then one day she had given him a lift in her carriage when he was walking to the station to go out by train to the Hunt Camp, having treated "Jim" to a train-ride as he had had a hard season.

He had travelled in the same compartment with her, and though she had talked to another fellow while he sat dumb, he would certainly not have exchanged his seat for one in an Elijan fiery chariot bound straight for Heaven "and no questions asked."

Next he had happened to travel in the same train to Delhi with her, and had had glimpses of her and a kindly nod at one or two junctions.

One day she had stopped her carriage in the street as he raised his hat, and had kindly enquired after "Jim," who had met with a slight accident.

She was wearing large pale green earrings and a necklace of pale green stones. There *was* a greyish tinge in her beautiful eyes.

One morning, out riding, he had met her and Dainton exercising the hounds, and he had volunteered his services as "whip." Her surcingle had come unfastened and he had put it right—and had had the heart-quickening joy of helping her to dismount and to mount again.

Once she had asked him to tea—and he loved home-made Scotish scones ever after.

Then he had seen her at a ball—and had dared to ask her for a dance.

Then came the game of golf with her—and *flight*. Flight from the position of loving and seeking a woman whose husband he detested.

Had Dainton been his friend he would have continued to seize every opportunity of beholding and hearing the woman who was to him the very incarnation of beauty, grace, wisdom, goodness, sweetness, and all the womanly virtues.

With Dainton his enemy, he felt it a degradation to her and to himself that he should think of her at all, much less love her and feed his love with glimpses, even though his love was reverential worship with no trace of fleshly taint.

The game of golf showed him where he stood, and from the edge of the precipice the fool leapt back.

She had asked him if her hands were rightly placed on her driver, and then, consciously, and intentionally, he had deliberately put his hands over hers, held them, and changed their position. Then he had flushed scarlet, and catching her eye had felt the blood ebbing and ebbing—as if all would concentrate in a bursting heart—leaving him pale as marble.

"What a deliciously naïve young man!" Mrs. Dainton had thought. "It isn't every man who at thirty-odd can blush violently when he touches a woman's hand 'in the execution of his duty.'" And she had registered him in her mental ledger as "quite a nice boy."

But Harris had gone home appalled at the realization that he was hopelessly and permanently, for he was a very "permanent" sort of person, in love with the wife of a man he hated, and had actually dared

to lay his beastly defiling gross hands upon hers. How she must have shuddered! How bitterly she must have regretted honouring him with the distinction of her condescension in letting him go round the links with her!

He was just fit to be a suburban dustman or to tar pigsties! *He*, to dare touch *her* hand! *He*, to dare to love *her*!

Who but a sneaking miserable hound would love the wife of a man who had quarrelled with him and insulted him.

And now the poor chap was dead, and one could dream. Dream. . . . Yes.

But one could not *hope*. Why—she was a rich woman quite apart from her husband's testamentary probabilities.

No . . . one could not hope.

It was not a little thing, though, that one might now honourably love, and honourably think over all the tiny-mighty, nothing-everything, insignificant-tremendous episodes of the days before the illuminating spark born of the touch of hands, the blinding flash of self-knowledge, self-revelation, and self-horror! It was not a little thing. It made life easier. It made life sweeter and purer. It made a Glory of a Shame.

But—one could not *hope*. No. . . .

A discreet cough, as from one who would not presume to disturb the Presence by the intrusion of his worthless dust, but——

"What is it, Boy?"

"*Tar* hai, Sahib. Post-wallah *sign* mangta."

"A telegram? Give me a pencil and I'll sign the receipt." . . .

"Some official tosh, I suppose." . . .

"What's this? *What?* Good God!"

"*Your Uncle James dead. You sole heir. Congratulations. Henry & Henry.*" Good God! Old, stingy, wealthy Uncle Jimmy pegged out, and Henry & Henry his solicitors wiring that he was "sole heir!" Couldn't be true! Some damned practical joke! But who in those parts knew his address, or even of his existence, except Henry & Henry, who had paid his allowance and looked after him as a schoolboy?

A fine modern house, a small park, some glass, an old orchard, a bit of shooting, and—say three thousand a year.

No *hope*? . . .

God! . . .

Hark! What was that? *One, two, three . . .!*

Minute guns! *The "alarm."*

"Boy! Get out my uniform, quick—and tell the syce to saddle 'Jim.' *Juldi!*"

CHAPTER XVIII

"ET PUIS—BONSOIR"

"The evil that men do lives after them."—A CLANEY AFTERMATH.

MR. MUIRHEAD-CARNE was not quite as British as his name implied. In fact, he had not one little lone drop of English blood in his body. Nor of European blood of any kind, unless it were low-class Greek. His grandpapa, in fact, had not pronounced or written the name "Muirhead-Carne" at all. Murad Khan was good enough for him. But Mr. Muirhead-Carne had Aspirations.

Mr. Muirhead-Carne's mamma was a lady of uneasy

virtue, born in Pera, nurtured in Smyrna, and killed in Port Said.

Mr. Muirhead-Carne's papa was a gentleman of confirmed bachelor habits who began by sweeping out Messrs. Poltroono's Cairo premises and ended by sweeping out their safe. He died of thirst. Quenched thirst—*bien entendu*. As he was a person of means, his virtues were writ in marble on a fine headstone bearing the name of Murat-Kahn. He had frequently confessed to being very cosmopolitan, and his London friends suspected him of a slight Israelitish strain. "He's a French gent with a touch o' German Jew," said the London agent of Messrs. Poltroono, in the days before the sudden coy withdrawal from the service of those gentlemen.

Mr. Stephanos Murat-Kahn had been the first of the Turkish - Levantine - Perote - Cairene - Suezian - Port-Saidish family to become a European.

Mr. Stephen Muirhead-Carne was the first to become a Britisher.

His son Angus McAlister Muirhead-Carne was the first to become a Scotsman, and to the end of his life could never quite lose a faintish "burr."

Not only was Mr. Stephen Muirhead-Carne a Britisher, he was a British Officer of his Majesty's Auxiliary Forces in India, and he held a commission from His Excellency the Viceroy as Captain of B Company in the Husseinabad Volunteer Rifles.

Throughout the week Mr. Stephen Muirhead-Carne was the trusted manager of Messrs. Dalli Bros., the great wheat exporters, Husseinabad branch, and on Saturday evenings he was the distrusted manager of B Company of the Government's Husseinabad Volunteers.

Distrusted because—among as feeble and inefficient a crew of officers, always omitting Lieutenant H. H. Harris and Second-Lieutenant White, as ever disgraced their commissions—he was the very rottenest, in drill, zeal, physique, courage, tact, military knowledge, fitness, ability, and everything that goes to make an officer.

Now among the volunteer corps of India there are many of the very first order, corps to which it is an honour to belong in any capacity whatsoever; corps in which it is a fine thing to hold a commission, and which it is a great thing to command; corps whose officers are British gentlemen, stout fellows and good soldiers; corps whose men are keen, and also sound material; corps who are at once a credit and an absolute safeguard to the cities they adorn. But the Husseinabad Volunteer Rifle Corps was not one of these.

To begin with, the Colonel of the Husseinabad Volunteers was a most unmilitary person, was thoroughly ashamed of his corps, felt justly that he looked a "dam-fool" in uniform, and had exceedingly little spare time.

The Brigadier, on the vacancy occurring, had begged him to accept the colonelcy, on account of his "position," as the leading merchant of Husseinabad and President of the Husseinabad Club, and his wealth. After a refusal, hopes of a decoration and a liking for the sound of the word "colonel," led Mr. Chittle to write an acceptance; and, to his later regret, he became Lieut.-Col. Job Chittle, commanding the Husseinabad Volunteer Rifle Corps. Before long, nothing annoyed him more than to be addressed, in the Club for example, as "colonel,"—except the necessity for putting on the "beastly" khaki uniform, or the "infernal mustard

and beetroot" mess-kit, which he rightly considered better fitted to be a livery than a uniform.

In the second place, the Adjutant detested his "job," and spent more time in grumbling at the cruel fate that made him a Volunteer Adjutant, for the sake of the extra pay, than in working for the corps. He attended parade once a week and signed a few papers once a day. The rest of the time he spent loafing in the club or "hogging" in his bungalow. He openly told his friends that his men were the scum of the earth and his officers anything but gentlemen —"a gang of clerks, tailors, and glorified office boys," in fact, with one or two exceptions.

In the third place, the corps took anybody and therefore got nobody—who was any good. Decent men declined to drill in the ranks with mongrel Negroid-Goa-Portuguese-English-Eurasian-Native comrades and to sleep in the same tent with their own cooks. As soon as the corps was open to any black loafer who claimed a drop of European blood or to any descendant of a race of Christianized native sweepers, all white men left it and most of the Parsis, Goanese, Eurasians and Jews of respectability.

The consequence of lack of exclusiveness, combined with this wretched rule of mixing races, was that the Husseinabad Corps, though large on paper, consisted of the very dregs of the non-native population, of hollow-chested weedy boys, and, with the exception of a small group, of black-faced depressed weaklings devoid of self-respect and honourable racial tradition.

The said small group was composed of Parsis, who were ex-students of the Husseinabad High School, and who joined the corps in order to be able to keep in contact with their beloved former headmaster,

Horatio Hamilton Harris. These young men had been smartly drilled, as cadets, at the school; had played hockey, football, and cricket; had been taught fencing and boxing, and were good shots. In comparison with the rest of the corps they were dignified, respect-worthy, firm-lipped, and firm-muscled men.

Unfortunately, their company was commanded by Mr., or rather, Captain, Stephen Muirhead-Carne, and it was impossible for that gentleman's subaltern, Lieutenant Harris, to do what he would have liked to do for the company.

While a most remarkably worthless and incompetent officer, Muirhead-Carne was exceeding quick to see "confounded officiousness" in anybody who was not, and who wished to work the company up.

Harris kept his ex-students together in No. 3 section, but their excellence only served to emphasize the badness of the rest of the company, and their upstand-ingness and accurate drill did but point the moral of new cloth in old garments.

Captain Muirhead-Carne, as has been stated, was all a volunteer officer should not be. He was very nervous in front of his company, and he did not know his drill. In battalion he was hopeless, and every order of the commanding officer was followed by an agonized whisper from Muirhead-Carne to the sergeant-instructor he tipped to stick to B Company, of "What do I say now?"

In person he was fat, puffy, gross, and pimply, reminding one of the apoplectic pug beloved of his Greek wife. He could neither ride nor shoot, and was heartily disliked by his men, many of whom were in the employ of Messrs. Dalli Bros., and encountered him in his civil capacity also. They said he

was no Sahib. However, he was in a position to force all the non-native, low-paid subordinates into B Company, and to keep it as large as it was rotten. Also for the sake of the rank, the uniform, and the sword he retained his commission and command of the company, in spite of scathing words from inspecting officers, and in spite of the knowledge that Harris could do admirably what he did execrably, and would give far more time, work, and thought than he himself did, to the company, if it were in his charge.

He retained his command, and thwarted his subaltern's efforts, until the unexpected happened.

Unexpected?

Nay, the impossible, the undreamed of, the absurd, the ridiculously unthinkable,—and *the corps was called upon to fight.* Actually to *fight*, to use the rifles wherewith it was armed, and to apply the drill and tactics it had been taught! . . .

Nothing in life had so completely and absolutely surprised and shocked Mr. Stephen Muirhead-Carne as did the realization that he was, with his company, on a bridge, with instructions to "*hold it to the last*" and prevent the maddened mob of rioters from crossing to devastate the European quarter which lay on the side of the river remote from the native city, and which was completely cut off from it, save by the said Bridge.

The last but one of the Murad Khans expected to *fight*—to fight with rude, rough men, and break all the family traditions of peaceful knavery! How in the name of Allah—no of God and the Christian Devil, did a Murad Khan come to be in such a galley. Mr., or rather Captain, Muirhead-Carne broke into a

cold sweat, and shuddered. . . . It must be a dream! . . . But no, it was sober truth. The fanatical city was up, and only blood could quench its fierce flames. The Hindu population was foaming at the mouth, at the massacre, last night, of a large band of its holiest priests with the great Liberator, Claney, at their head. The Mohammedan population was at the height of the Mohurrum frenzy, and contained a large Pathan element.

And the late Mr. Dé's disciples and co-religionists were extremely busy.

All the requisites of a very pretty row were available.

The troops were ten miles away, on Brigade manœuvres; the strong Deputy-Commissioner was dead—"struck down by the hand of God, doubtless, my brothers, for oppressing His people"—and not only had the Government just murdered the Friend of India, the noble-souled Protector of the Poor, the great and good Liberator, Claney, but was slaughtering priests wholesale. Religion was in danger—nay, religion was to be stamped out! All priests and holy men were to be slain indiscriminately! Hinduism, Mohammedanism, and every other *ism* were to be abolished and all men were to be Christianized or killed! Then let us rather die, my brothers—and let us die killing, burning, torturing! Up! What are a hundred thousand Infidels and Outcasts to four hundred million Sons of the Mother? Up! Burn! Slay! Destroy! Let all unite to drive the accursed dogs of Feringhees into the sea! Up!

The young man—recently playing games at Oxford—who was "acting" for Dainton's successor, was worthy of his Service and of his country. Directly a green-faced gibbering subordinate had rushed into his

presence, sobbing and panting out a story of a vast mob—or congeries of mobs—smashing in the doors of sellers of arms and ammunition as well as the doors of the liquor-sellers; of murders of policemen, Eurasians, bunnias, and money-lenders; of fiery harangues and exhortations to seize the telegraph office, the railway-station, the treasury, the banks, and the Volunteer Head-quarters, with its thousand rifles and magazine, and to slay every foreigner in the neighbourhood before sweeping on to the nearest town—he had lit a cheroot, called for his horse, and remarked to the gasping messenger: "'Bottle 'em up and stew 'em in their own juice,' is the tip, my friend. . . . You look quite excited."

He had then sent a trusty sepoy galloping to the camp of the Husseinabad Brigade, ordered the firing of the three guns for the "alarm," notifying the volunteers to assemble at their head-quarters, and had ridden in quick succession to the police-lines, the barracks, and the bungalow of Lieut.-Colonel Job Chittle, Commanding the Husseinabad Volunteer Rifles—all near together, fortunately.

The few soldiers left in Husseinabad, for guard and fatigue duties, were assembled at the arsenal, the armed police were divided between the railway-station and the general telegraph-office, and the squad of mounted police were dispatched to the gaol with instructions to charge directly the mob appeared on the open plain before that home of five hundred of the worst criminals of the Bendras Presidency.

To Lieut.-Colonel Job Chittle, this very cool and efficient young gentleman gave instructions to send his strongest company, with a maxim-gun section, to hold the bridge leading from the city to the Civil

Lines, where were the European bungalows and the shops, and with the remaining companies to protect the two Banks and his own head-quarters. On no account were his men to fire harmless volleys over the heads of the rioters—they were to shoot in self-defence, as soon as any determined attack was made.

"Sit tight and the British troops will be here in four hours," said he. "The native cavalry should be here in a couple of hours now, and no doubt they are staunch and loyal."

As he turned away from Chittle's bungalow, a party of men armed with hog-spears, rifles, swords, revolvers, and assorted lethal weapons, rode up to him, and their spokesman, saluting, said: "Sir, the gentlemen of the Husseinabad Club put their—er—weapons at your disposal," and struck an attitude.

"There are enough mobs about already, thank you," was the reply, "Go home again, and if you survive this show, become Volunteers!"

And with many a "God bless my soul" and "How shocking" Lieut.-Colonel Job Chittle had put on his uniform with shaking hands and fumbling fingers, and had driven down to the head-quarters of the corps in which he put no trust and had no pride nor faith.

"'Stand to a rush of rioters armed with *lathis*, axes, knives, and guns?' Not they! Bolt—and leave me the option of being butchered or bolting with them," he soliloquized.

At the head-quarters he was greatly surprised to find a very large turn-out of the men, and mentally ascribed it to their desire for their own personal safety and the feeling that, united and rifle in hand, they would stand a better chance of saving their hides.

Consternation sat upon almost every face, including

that of the fat colonel, the fat Parsi major, the fat Eurasian senior captain, and the majority of the other officers—ill-drilled, nervous, incompetent, self-distrusting, and thoroughly distrusted.

The adjutant bustled about and shouted expeditory orders to the sergeant-major, a bemedalled veteran who remarked unto his soul: "Four medals and eleving bars, and I'll be knocked on the 'ead by a brick-bat in a street row, through bein' sent out with these 'erring-gutted 'ounds," and one of the three or four cool and efficient persons present.

The machine-gun section was found to consist of two men only, neither of whom professed his ability to load and fire the gun, and when the sergeant-instructor and drill corporal volunteered to do so, it was remembered that the lock had gone wrong the last time, or rather the only time, the gun had been fired on the rifle-range and that the indispensable spare locks were of course *dans l'air*. So the only possibly useful thing about the corps was out of action before entering action.

Lieutenant-Colonel Job Chittle harangued his officers volubly while precious moments passed, and by exhorting them to show the mettle of their pastures, and reminding them that it is sweet and decorous to die for one's country, turned their nervousness to terror. Nay, as he glibly quoted—

> And how can man die better,
> Than facing fearful odds,
> For the ashes of his fathers
> And the temples of his gods,

Captain Ferdinand Fonseca della Ribiera Albuquerque d'Souza of C Company frankly went home. His father's

ashes were in Goa, and the foe were welcome to the temples of his gods if they wanted them.

"And now, gentlemen, march off your companies to the posts I have allotted them, and remember that to-day, as ever, 'England expects that every man will do his duty,'" the Colonel concluded.

And thus it was that the surprised, indignant, alarmed and excited Captain Stephen Muirhead-Carne actually found himself with upwards of seventy armed men, prepared to dispute the passage of a bloodthirsty Pathan-sprinkled, infuriated mob, bent on murder, rape, fire, and loot, to the Civil Lines. No—to be accurate—supposed to be prepared to dispute the passage of the aforesaid bloodthirsty mob—should it come.

For he was not prepared "to do such." Not by any manner of means.

To be called "Captain," to have a "mess," to go to Government House in a uniform and to be saluted were all very fine—to be disembowelled by an Afghan knife, brained by a *lathi*, or killed by a brick were wholly different propositions, and quite outside Captain Stephen Muirhead-Carne's philosophy. So, as has been said, nothing in life had so completely surprised and shocked him as the finding of himself entrusted with the defence of a bridge and in receipt of orders to defend it to the last, because the safety of the European population depended on him alone, until the troops arrived.

"Defend it to the *last*!" Beastly word that. What would that *last* be. Trampled to death, beaten, hacked, flung into the river, carried off and tortured by Pathans, or what? Captain Stephen Muirhead-Carne had a fine large healthy stomach and loved it dearly; he had a

fine large healthy bank balance and loved it only less dearly; he had a fine large healthy wife and loved her nearly as much. . . . "*Last!*" . . . "Defend it to the *last*!" . . . Bedamned to *last*! . . . All the blood of all the Murad Khans of the bazaars of Pera, Smyrna, Aleppo, Cairo, Suez, and Port Said rose in generous revolt against such coercion, such waste, such stupidity. . . .

He fumbled with the wrongly-tied sword-knot on the wrong-pattern hilt of his tailor-made sword, chewed his moustache, asked if "anybody had got a drink," and tried, in vain, to light the cigarette to which his trembling fingers could not hold the match. The men, halted in column of fours at the bridge-head, talked—telling stories of the fearful ferocity, strength, courage, and skill of Pathans; of the cruel wild fanaticism of the Husseinabad Mussulmans at Mohurrum time, and of the Husseinabad Brahmins at *any* time—and speculated on the success of the political agitators in stirring up and arming the large and sturdy population of mill-coolies.

A fever-ridden, half-starved, anæmic Eurasian clerk, who kept himself and family of six on thirty shillings a month, suddenly collapsed, fainting, and fell to the ground with a rattle of accoutrements. Starting, staring eye-balls, with much show of yellow whites, gazed apprehensively at the city from which came a deep and disturbing hum, shouts, explosions, and occasional horrid mob-howls.

And the soul of Lieutenant Horatio Hamilton Harris was sad and sore within him as he watched the trembling coward standing at the head of a company of drilled men armed with repeating rifles, unlimited ammunition, and bayonets—and funking a native mob.

If the mob came suddenly pouring out of the mouths of the slums and alleys that debouched on the open space at the other side of the bridge, and came rushing to seize it, the gallant Captain would be the first to flee, and the company would naturally follow him.

Then the foul scum of the slums and alleys of Husseinabad would quickly be at work among the trim bungalows of the Civil Lines—and Sybil Dainton was there, Sybil Dainton who was *free*—free to receive, anon, the attentions of a man sufficiently wealthy to ask her to be his wife!

Oh, that he had command of the company—he would put spirit into it somehow—and he could quite rely on his own ex-students, the good Parsi lads—steady, disciplined, and brave *while they had a leader they trusted*. . . . Was he so tied by "military" discipline that the woman he loved and the European population were to be hunted down like rats, tortured, and butchered, because the man in command was an arrant coward? . . . No sign of help—and no hope of help, yet—and the riot-noises of the city obviously coming nearer. Sooner or later there was bound to be a rush for the bridge—especially when the treasury, gaol, station, and Banks were found to be guarded.

A far-away volley suddenly rang out, and the sounds of independent firing followed. There was an attack on one of the posts—the hunt was up.

Harris stepped up to Captain Stephen Muirhead-Carne and saluted.

"Hadn't we better make our dispositions, sir?" said he.

"Who is commanding this company—you or I? . . . What had we better do? . . Shall we go to the far side of the bridge or stay here? . . . Should

the men lie down? . . . Ought we to be in open order or closed or what? . . . Good God! What's to be done? " was the shrill reply.

" *Fix bayonets,*" he shrieked before Harris could reply.

The men fumbled with their bayonets, many obviously wondering how the manœuvre was effected, and quickly lost all semblance of military formation. A knot of excited " coloured " men in khaki, chattering like monkeys, and brandishing bayonets, and three white officers, stood where recently had been a company in column of fours.

Some of the men commenced " charging magazines " unbidden, some drank deeply from their water-bottles, several sat on the ground, one made a speech on the wicked folly of letting the Brigade go out into Camp of Exercise. . . . The men were rapidly getting out of hand. . . .

" May I make dispositions, Sir, and report to you for approval? " he asked again in a conciliatory and respectful manner. " I could post the men while you think out a—er—general scheme, and you could of course make such changes as you thought necessary. We mustn't be caught like this."

" Look here, Lieutenant Harriss, mann, *who* is commanding this companee? Iss itt you or me? Lett them isstand easee while I tink." He walked away holding his head.

Good God! The man was " *chee-chee*! "

Under the stress and the strain, the fright and the fear, Murad Khan was absorbing Muirhead-Carne rapidly. What should Harris do?

The man was a half-caste, a " chee-chee " chatterer—and Sybil Dainton was over there.

Should he put him under arrest and let the sergeant-major and the drill-corporal sit on him, while he took command? Should he take it upon him to shoot the fellow, and so probably save the company, and thereby deliver the European women and children from unthinkable deaths—in other words, save Sybil Dainton?

Something must be done at once. He called to White, the junior subaltern of the company. White strode up and saluted. He was enjoying himself thoroughly, and expected that the mob would cross the bridge over the corpses of Harris, the sergeant-major, the drill-corporal, and himself, remnants of a departed B Company, in the next few minutes.

"Look here, Young Bill," quoth Harris, "our brave Captain has got the funks. Are you prepared to follow the Pirate Chief if the latter rebels and chucks him in the river—or is it your painful dooty to stand up for him?"

"I'll go and shoot him myself now, if you like," said Second Lieutenant White cheerfully. "We shall all be corpsed if he lives, so I think he might e'en die. . . . I am opposed to shooting superior officers on principle, but if he remains in command, this bridge will be crossed inside the hour."

"Yes. D'you think the men will be greatly invigorated by the sight of his brains though, if we kill him—or will have their confidence in us magnified much, if they see us in open rebellion? They only want an excuse to bolt."

"Let's go and tell him he is deposed and had better go. Say we'll shoot him, accidently, in the back, if he doesn't slope—after formally putting you in command."

"That's it. And I *will* shoot him if he doesn't. I think I'm justified as her life—as their lives, I mean—

hang on it," said Harris, looking towards the distant Dainton bungalow.

A roar grew, swelled, and drew nearer. A man ran across the open space from one slum entrance to another, threw up his arms and fell as a rifle cracked in the street he had just left.

Harris turned and hurried to where Captain Stephen Muirhead-Carne leant against the balustrade. On the tip of his tongue were the words, "I arrest you as a coward and take command of this company," but they were not spoken.

As he approached, the Levantine raised an ashy face from his pillowed arms and said—or rather whispered, "Harris, I am veree ill. I am damned bad. I tink it is cholera. Reallee, I do. You must take command. I tink I am dying."

"Then go at once, and I will take your place," replied Harris joyfully, pointing towards the European quarter. "Get out, you cowardly dog."

With a gasp and a shudder and a face barely human in its fear, spite, and rage, Captain Stephen Muirhead-Carne slunk away, casting off his accoutrements and tunic—for some reason—as he went.

"*'Shun*," bawled Harris to the disorganized company. "Into line, left *turn*.—Pick up that dressing smartly.—Cover off.—*Number*.—Stand at *ease*."

The men fell in, "dressed," numbered, and stood at ease, mechanically—at heart thankful for a leader.

"There goes a coward and a cur," continued he, pointing to the fast retreating form of the scion of the Murad Khans of Asia Minor, "and any other coward and cur may follow him at once. Any man who is afraid can go now. If he tries to go later I will shoot him myself."

Longing eyes turned towards the disappearing officer. Patrick Redmond O'Connor, who was as black as your hat, had the courage of his cowardice. Without a word he fled after his commanding-officer like a professional sprinter.

"There goes the fleet racer, Pat O'Connor—by Black Sam Sheediboy out of Sweeperbai Methrani—" said Harris coarsely, trying to lash shame, if not courage, into the spiritless gang of nondescripts "Any more?"

"Parsis! Four paces forward—*March*.—Right *close*.—Stand *easy*," he resumed. "I'm not talking to you—for I know you are *men*. Now you others! Such of you as are also men fall in on the left of the Parsis, and let the others clear out." . . . Two brothers, Jews, stepped up beside the end Parsi file—the remainder, nearly fifty men, hung irresolute, letting "I dare not run away" wait upon "I would"—"*my word*, I would!"

"Fall in with the Parsis, or run for your lives," shouted Harris. "By God, I'll have a volley put into you if you don't do one or the other."

A big Eurasian fell in beside the Jews and a very black native Christian, of the sweeper caste, calling himself Sholto McDougall (!), joined him.

A trickle of men filtered away from the bridge towards the Civil Lines quarter. A dozen or so stood shame-faced, probably the biggest cowards of all—afraid to join the force that was going to fight, afraid to confess the cowardice that withheld them.

"Parsis! about *turn*. At the cowardly hounds in front, fixed sights, *fi*——"

There was no need to complete the "*fire*." The remnant fled, throwing down their rifles to flee the faster.

"Good," said Harris. "Now we'll get to work. *Number.*—Form *fours.*—*Right.*—Quick *march.*"

Arrived at the far, or city, end of the bridge, Harris halted his squad and formed it in double line across the end of the bridge—front rank sitting comfortably, rear rank standing comfortably.

"Now men," said he, "take my word for it, that if you shoot straight and shoot fast, no mob can come within a hundred yards of you. Don't you fire a shot until you get the word, and when you *do* get it—kill your man, for I'll knock the head off anyone who shoots carelessly."

Leaving ten men in each rank, he took the remainder and allotted them stations and duties. Some were to watch that no kind of boat or raft was launched from the burning-ghat, others that nobody got under the bridge with explosives or fire, others were to shoot all who approached a heap of flint stones. Meantime these men were set to collect every kind of obstacle that would serve as part of a barricade and give cover to the firing line.

The men of the detached squad worked like beavers, but Harris kept his twenty strictly on guard, with eyes on the street-ends, bayonets fixed, rifles at the "ready," magazines charged, and cartridge in chamber.

"When I give the obsolete order '*Present,*' I want every man to level his rifle as though he is about to fire—but to *wait* for the word to fire. The sight of the levelled rifles may be sufficient. Don't forget —*present* as you used to do before the order was abolished, and then wait for the word '*Fire,*'" he ordered.

"I believe that building is a school-house," said White, pointing to a shed at the end of a street; "shall

I galump across and pinch the desks, benches, and furniture generally."

"Yes," said Harris; "the mob doesn't seem to be coming any nearer—though it appears mighty busy in there."

White and four men doubled across to the shed, beat in the door and quickly emerged with two long desks and a blackboard. Other furniture followed, and the barricade at the bridge head, though no obstacle to determined men, soon gave a certain amount both of cover and confidence to the waiting squad.

Hullo! Nearer and nearer came the noise once again. The tumult grew. Individual shouts could be distinguished, and soon individual words. Harris was irresistibly reminded of the swelling clamour of the stage mob, at home, at the time of "alarums and excursions without."

Here they are! At last! . . .

"Steady, men! Show you are cool as well as brave. No firing till I say the word 'Fire.' . . . I'll bawl it loud enough to deafen you, so make no mistake," said Harris.

From several streets at once poured forth a dense rabble of *budmashes*[1] yelling, "*Maro! maro!*"[2] brandishing knives, axes, hammers, sticks, *lathis*, sickles, and various kinds of guns and pistols. Green flags were not wanting, and at the head of each deploying mob were stalwart Pathans with shaven pates and greasy love-locks, or with tangled manes, or pointed conical turban-encircled caps. The Pathan is the Donnybrook Irishman of the East and fights as naturally and untiringly as a Labour agitator orates.

[1] Blackguards. rascals. [2] Kill! Kill!

"Fight, loot, and be bloody," is his simple creed, "for to-morrow we may not have the chance."

The vomiting street mouths poured a vast crowd of drink-maddened, hate-maddened, and religion-maddened beasts into the open space before the bridge, and the crowd rushed across it.

"Present," said Harris, quietly, and the rifles rose as one. . . . The mob halted, and its front rank fell back into the mass as the edge of a baffled wave falls back from the rock into the wave itself.

"Come here, Young Bill," said Harris. "Take command, and shoot directly I am down, or directly anybody passes me in your direction. I am going to argue with the gents."

White saluted and stood in front of the squad as Harris moved off.

"Mind! Not a shot unless I am down or passed. *Then* give 'em hell an' pepper. Be a blooming Horatius, Young Bill, and don't let 'em cross this bridge."

Harris strode towards the seething, yelling mob, whose leaders were drawing its attention to the smallness of the party obstructing its rush for revenge, loot, murder, fire, and rapine.

"*Arê!* brothers," shouted Harris in fluent vernacular, raising his hand for silence. "Listen not to these lying dogs, who would lead you to gallows and bonds. The white soldier-people are at hand. Cross the bridge and you will be shot down in scores, and cast into gaol in hundreds."

"Kill the Feringhee dog!" howled an elderly Mulla, casting a stone at Harris with more violence than accuracy.

"*I* will kill him," shouted a huge Pathan, rushing

forward with a brass-bound iron-shod *lathi*, a bamboo pole some eight feet long and two inches thick.

Harris drew neither sword nor revolver, but stood his ground, hand on hip. Whirling the staff above his head the Pathan leapt at the Englishman—inches shorter than himself—and brought the *lathi* down with all his strength on—nothing.

Harris had sprung aside.

Then measuring his distance, throwing his weight into the blow and hitting for all he was worth, and an ex-Public-Schools' Champion and half-blue is worth a trifle at the game, he hit the finest punch he had ever dealt, fairly on the point of the jaw of the surprised Pathan, who dropped as though shot.

Second Lieutenant White drew out his watch.

"One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight—nine—OUT," he called. "I give the fight to Harris, twelve-stun champion of the Husseinabad Volunteers."

The Pathan did not move. When Harris got a chance to bring off his "knock-out" punch, there was commonly no indecent hurry on the part of its recipient.

"*Allah!*" Did these Feringhees slay Pathans with their hands.

"*Wah! Wah!*" This was a man and a Sahib. A Sahib! Then slay him! Rush the bridge. On! On to the Civil Lines and loot! Rush the bridge!

The rush came.

Harris drew sword and revolver.

"Stop!" he yelled. "The English soldier-people are here. You go to your deaths. It is a trap!"

A butcher leapt at him with raised cleaver. Harris's arm shot out and straightened and his body swung forward in a fierce lunge. The sword, well held, well driven, and well recovered, flickered through the man

and out as another drove at Harris with an iron crowbar. He parried sabre-fashion and lunged at the man's throat, transfixing it. He was surrounded, therefore he was passed—and White's voice rang out "*Fire.*"

In one minute over three hundred rounds had been fired into the dense throng and it wavered.

"Go on firing and don't hit me or Mr. Harris," yelled White, unable longer to stand the strain of watching Harris's unequal fight, as he dashed to his aid.

He saw the heterogeneous weapons rise and fall, caught the flash of Harris's blade, and heard the crack of his revolver.

Shouting like one possessed, and firing off his revolver and then a Browning pistol as he charged, he made his way to his friend's side.

Harris's revolver was empty and he was striking, instead of thrusting, with his sword.

White's eight shots from the pistol gave his friend space and breathing time—time to load and time to say: "You silly young ass, get back to your men if you can. Come on—together. Now."

With a rush the two charged with extended swords, and presented revolvers as the ring opened and broke and closed again around them. In a moment they were separated. Harris felt a sharp stinging pain in his back, drove his sword through a pickaxe-swinging coolie, felt a star-bringing crash upon his head, fired his last shot, and as eyesight and hearing failed murmured "Good-bye, Sybil" . . . "Good old Fakir" . . .

"Steady," said the sergeant-major to the squad, "you're doin' prime. Don't shoot wild and they'll

never reach yer. Don't fergit the bayonet depresses the rifle a bit. . . . By Gord! 'ere's the cavalree. Come on! Now then! Ch-a-a-a-a-r-r-r-g-e!" And straight at the mob dashed the gallant handful, for behind them came a cloud of dust, above and through which shone the lance points and red and white pennons of the Bendras Lancers as they thundered towards the bridge.

It was glorious fun!

Such a day's sport as the Bendras Lancers had not enjoyed since China!

"Caught 'em absolutely fair, my boy, and, by Jove, kept 'em on the run till they wished 'emselves swimming in boiling oil for a relief," was the version of a subaltern.

"A really charming morning," was the universal verdict of the members of the Officers' Mess of this smartest of smart cavalry corps. But what had been Horatio Hamilton Harris was a mess unto itself—a very nasty mess indeed.

CHAPTER XIX

ONE MORE COINCIDENCE

"BARLE tells me that that poor chap Harris once occupied this merry mansion, and not so long ago either," remarked Burgoyne to his wife at breakfast one morning.

"Yes," replied Mummy, "and those unfortunate Daintons after him. "I suppose gossip will add them to the list of the victims of the Fakir's Curse, even though they didn't die here. I shan't be sorry when we leave, though we *won't* leave until we have to."

"No. We have been awfully jolly here, and as fit as fleas. My one complaint is that I cannot see the ghost or ghosts. I'd give almost anything to know the rights of that 'White Sahib' story of Fic's. No doubt he has overheard something and imagined more."

"It's rummy, say what one will. Fancy a child *inventing* a more-or-less transparent person in riding-kit, and a terrified cat and dog; *and* refraining from any kind of embellishment. One single groan, or clanking of chains, or beckoning, or anything stereotyped or orthodox would have stamped the whole thing as reproductive imagination at once. As it is, it is merely incomprehensible and inexplicable." . . .

After breakfast the father and mother entered the Junior Curlton Club for a talk with the President and Vice-President thereof, ere commencing the day's pursuits.

"Boodle looks very pale and dark-under-the-eyes this morning, even for 'one whose eyes were put in with smutty fingers,'" observed Daddy.

"Missie Boodle Baba dreaming bad dream and calling out in the night, Mem-sahib," said Ayah.

"Have *you* been 'drumping,' too, Darling?" asked Mummy.

"I don't know whether I 'drump' or whether it was real, Mummy," was the reply. "Perhaps it was a nightmare's-nest. I thought a lady came and stood beside the bed and peeked at me—but I couldn't see her very plainly because of the mosquito-curtains. She looked awful sollum."

Mummy's colour faded a trifle as she replied: "I dare say Ayah very often comes and 'peeks' at you when you are asleep."

"Yes, but this was a *pukka* Mem-sahib—quite white,

and all dressed in white and her neck was covered up—like Sister Familiar of the Angels—at the Convent," answered the little girl.

"Perhaps Sister Amelia of the Angels came and had a look at you then," ventured Mummy.

"Oh no, Darling, this lady was nothing like her really. She was another deader, I think. I 'specs I 'drump'—like Fic,' said Boodle.

"Better leave it at that," put in Daddy.

"Yes, my pet," he continued, "you dreamt a funny dream. Let's play steeplechases and I'll be your mount. Shall it be 'all-fours' or shall I go on my hind legs?" . . .

"Who told you about the poor lady whose throat was hurt, Boodle?" asked Mummy that evening during the "children's hour"—the hour between the evening ride with Bill and dressing for dinner—which she invariably devoted to her idols.

"What lady?" asked Boodle.

"The one whose throat was hurt—and who came to see you in bed."

"Nobody. How did she hurt her throat? Did she swallow a fish-bone?"

Mummy dropped the subject. The child had *not* been "primed," nor heard tales of murder and suicide.

"What *is* one to make of it, Billum?" asked Mummy at dinner.

"Nothing at all, Jezebelina," was the reply. "There are no effectual fakir's-curses; there are no ghosts. Coincidences there *are*, and this eligible family residence has got something like a monopoly of them. *We're* not superstitious, and we defy the 'local influence' as that ass Barle calls it. Here's to us."

"We are in the hands of God," said Mummy.

"I wish we were also in some other house and had never seen or heard of this one," she added. "I have that beastly 'presentimental' feeling at which you laugh. It's all very well to say presentimental and sentimental are synonymous, and that woman's intuition shows her kinship with the lower animals that have instinct—but I'm worried"

"Let's have a bottle of champagne, old lady"

"*Man!* . . . But I think I'll have a cup of tea after dinner."

"Then you'll be awake all night—and see ghosts."

. . .

That night Burgoyne was awakened by his wife's voice calling quietly and insistently, "Bill!" "Bill!" "I want you!"

Rising from the hammock in the verandah, in which he slept, he entered his wife's bedroom. Mrs. Burgoyne was cool and calm—though very pale and obviously shocked.

"What is it, sweetheart?" he asked.

"Bill, old man, I've seen a ghost," was the reply. "About half an hour ago I awoke and lay thinking. After a while I turned over—and saw a woman approaching me. I was absolutely wide awake, and thought for a moment that it might be Ayah. And yet I *knew* it was not. She was dressed in a white robe, like a night-dress, and her throat was bound and swathed and bandaged. She came quite near the bed—with a gliding movement, and I was conscious of seeing the lamp through her body. I felt no fear."

"Love us!" said Bill. "I should have howled."

"I said, 'Who are you, and what do you want?' and she simply stood and stared, with a look of most awful grief, and woe—and *sympathy*, I thought."

"We had a chap at school called 'Skin-and-Grief,'" observed Bill, who was badly upset and troubled.

"She seemed to be simply *dying* to tell me something, and unable to speak."

"Wonder if ghosts *can* die?" mused Bill.

"I feel sure she came to try and warn me, Bill! What *shall* we do?"

"Avoid tea after dinner, for one thing," was the reply.

"It was a warning," repeated Mummy.

"Pretty inefficient sort of party for the job," said her husband. "Dunno *now* what we're warned against! Is it Drink, Dicing, or Devil-worship? . . . What did the young woman do, then?"

"I sat up, and said, 'What do you want?' again, and she just stared and stared in anguish and pity, and then slowly retired, and as she drew back she dissolved."

"Liver," said Bill.

"I'll bring my camp-bed in here, now, and if she comes back and approaches my chaste cot, I shall call her a forward hussy."

"Bill," said Mrs. Burgoyne in the morning, "I got to sleep some-time-or-other and had a most vivid dream. I hope I shall never have another like it. I dreamt that that poor woman came into the room again, just as she did when I was awake, and said, '*In your dreams I can speak to you. Which do you love best? Oh, Go! Go! Go!*' And I knew she was Mrs. Reild. What did she mean by 'Which do you

love best?' Was it 'Which of the three could you least afford to lose.' Bill, shall we go?"

Mrs. Burgoyne's lip trembled.

"I had a wonderfully vivid dream once," replied her husband. "I dreamt that a long-dead Uncle appeared to me and said, '*Arise! Search in the right-hand pocket of the old dress-waistcoat in the left-hand drawer of the top of the ancient press in the large attic. I left a sovereign there.*' I arose. 'Twas a bitter cold night. I lit a candle and made my shivering way to the large attic. There it was. I knew it was. In it was an ancient press. I knew there was. In the top of it was a left-hand drawer. I knew it well. In the drawer was an old figured-and-flowered dress-waistcoat. I knew there was. In the right-hand pocket of it there was—nothing. I expected there was. Yes. It was a most vivid dream. I don't take any stock in dreams."

The lips that had trembled smiled.

"I wish we had never come here, Billum," said Mrs. Burgoyne.

* * * * * * * * *

"Yaas," drawled Mr. Xotirotipopoulos, late of Constantinople, in the bar of the Karabad Club, "pooah Burgoyne is down mit enterig. Vill anybody take twenty to one he never leave that house alive?"

"I will," said Lieutenant Borlayse.

"A honderd rupees?" asked Mr. Xotirotipopoulos, producing his book.

"No—a thousand," was the reply.

"Ho! the Devil!" chuckled Mr. Xotirotipopoulos, "dat vill take me home, firs' class, and gif me a liddle for britge to play."

Buster made a rapid calculation of assets. "Two thousand," said he.

"Hein? Dat vill bring me also back firs' class. T'anks, Mr. Borlayse."

"If I win, I'll buy the house, and burn it," said Buster.

. . . . . .

Poor Aloys Burgoyne!

It is doubtful whether she slept for two consecutive hours for two consecutive months. Everything seemed for the worst. Bill had held on until he had collapsed, before seeing the doctor. Good Colonel O'Cloghry was gone. The symptoms were such that the treatment was, at first, for sun-fever.

The dusky-faced Goanese nurse was afflicted with thirst and quenched it liberally.

And behind all was the dreadful record of the house!

And behind that the thought, "But for me we should never have come here." He would surely die! She lived in an awful dream—a walking nightmare.

Would he die? He must die. *God! he must* NOT *die.* Not now. Not here.

Any punishment but that. Let *her* die, the most awful death conceivable. Let the All-Merciful Father break her heart in some other way.

Perhaps the only person who could conceive a tithe of her suffering was Buster.

. . . . . .

"I hope you have forty thousand rupees at the bank, Sotty," remarked Barle, the Executive Engineer to Mr. Xotirotipopoulos, one morning a few weeks after the display of the latter's good taste that culminated in Buster's pinning that Levantine gentleman to a very large bet.

"Vy?"

"Because Burgoyne is on the mend, and I am rejoiced for your sake as well as for his."

"Burgoyne is not yet out of the woods," replied the layer of odds. "I 'ope Mr. Borlayse has got two t'ousands at ze bank. I have known Sudden-Death's Lodge these twendy year."

. . . . . .

The day came when Daddy was propped up with cushions and the children were brought into the sick-room for a minute.

"Who is the man with curly hair and whiskers?" inquired Boodle.

"I think it is a deader," replied her brother.

"It's your own Daddy, darlings," said Mummy, or what was left of Mummy, an emaciated invalid herself, as a tear trickled.

"Oh, Mummy! what a fib!" said Boodle. "Come and play at Daddy's fooneral again, Fic!"

Daddy smiled feebly—and a few minutes later a procession passed the open door of his room.

It was headed by Venus, who was harnessed to a doll's perambulator, which bore a glove-box draped with a Union Jack. On this lay a forage cap and a table knife.

Venus was in mourning, as a black hair-ribbon, tied to his tail, testified.

Behind the perambulator followed Widdy the Second, saddled and bridled, with black cloth and tape. A charger.

Fic was the firing party, and heavily armed.

Boodle was the band, and fully equipped.

As the cortège passed, the words,

"We can bury him in your plot, and see how that

rat we planted is getting on," were borne on the breezes.

Daddy grinned the first hearty grin he had achieved for weeks, and asked if he might have a rump-steak-and-stout, instead of whey, for dinner.

. . . . . .

A fortnight later, all four sat on the deck of the S.S. *Thibet*, and Mr. Xotirotipopoulos had lost his bet. But he never lost his money, for he is far too good a financier to honour an "idle, chaffing bet," even if booked and witnessed.

So Sudden-Death Lodge still stands.

. . . . . .

But Sudden-Death Lodge stands empty, a dismantled ruin.

Nevertheless, no sane and sober man believes in Fakirs' Curses any more than he does in Ghosts.

Still, East of Suez, there *are* Coincidences and Queer Occurrences.

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